June 16th, 2018

To Honorable American College of Surgeons,

Being selected as the Year 2018 American College of Surgeons/American Society of Breast Surgeons (ACS/ASBrS) International Scholar upon the recommendation of both ACS and ASBrS is one of the most honorable and valuable award of my life. This scholarship enabled me to attend ASBrS conference during which I had the opportunity to meet peer breast surgeons from North America and all around the world who are the leaders promoting high quality breast surgery care. I attended every session and figure out the major issues which are essential to improve breast surgery care in my country. Moreover, I had the chance to discuss with international surgeons from underdeveloped or developing countries pointing out the common problems and agreed to get in touch for future collaborations. With regards to annual meeting, I have to confess that from the pre-meeting courses - which I attended ‘Basic Breast Ultrasound’ and ‘Stereotactic Breast Biopsy’ Courses, Sunrise Workshops, which I attended ‘Survivorship: How to Set up a Survivorship Program that Fullfills ASCO, COC and NABPC Criteria’, General Sessions, Keynote Lecture, How I Do it Videos, Oral Presentations, Debates and Ask the Experts session- till the adjourn all of the scientific program was greatly detailed, full of current evidence based data and comprehensible, reflecting the meticulous work and excellence of the faculty. I had the chance to attend the written exams of Breast Ultrasound and Stereotactic Biopsy Certification and Accreditation. On 4th of June, I received a mail from Breast Imaging Technologies Certification and Accreditation Committee of American Society of Breast Surgeons informing me that I have successfully passed both of the breast ultrasound and stereotactic breast biopsy written exams, establishing one of my aims due to this scholarship. During the annual meeting, Dr. Jane Mendez who was my mentor organized an international members meeting giving us chance to meet other international attendees and discuss the issues how to improve surgical breast care.
worldwide and integrate international colleagues to ASBrS. I had the privilege to have a
dinner with Dr. Kathyrine Yao and Dr. Terry Sarantou, which was very attractive both
socially and academically. We
talked about the status of the
breast care in Turkey, my aims
and issues required to be
upgraded in my country. I am
really grateful for their kindness
and mentorship that improved
my vision of quality about breast
care. I would like to thank Dr. Terry Sarantou for accompanying me at the Presidential
Reception of Dr. Steven L. Chen where I met masters of breast surgery, namely Dr. Steven L. Chen, Dr. Kelly Hunt and Dr. Funda Meric-Bernstein. This was just like a dream that I
had the opportunity to talk with the scientists who are guiding current breast care. I am
grateful again to Dr. Chen and his gorgeous wife Mrs. Chen for their extraordinary
hospitality. In terms of annual meeting, it is my pleasure to send my great thanks to Dr.
Mahmoud El Tamer for his kindness and Miss Mara Lang from ASBrS for her help. To
conclude, the presentations and courses in the annual meeting was overwhelming and
provided a new vision to me.

In Chicago, I attended National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC)
New Surveyor Training on 14th of June, which impressed me so much about how to design
a program to improve breast care for breast centers and the accreditation process, which
in fact, should be a must for every national or international center providing breast care.
The attitude of the trainers was really commendable in terms of emphasizing that during
surveying process surveyors’ aim is to assess the current status of the center and then
guide them to incline their standards, but not to disturb people working there. I believe
this philosophy is very crucial to direct breast centers to apply for survey and
accreditation. The dinner with NAPBC Board members was unbelievable and a great
experience for me. In particular, I had the privilege to meet Dr. David P. Winchester
personally and talk with him about breast care in Turkey. His magnificent knowledge
about breast care in US and globally greatly impressed me. It was one of the greatest
honors of this scholar to have chance to meet and interview with him.
On 15th of July, which was one of the milestones in my career, I attended the NABPC Board Meeting and made a presentation about Breast Care in Turkey to Board Members at ACS Headquarters. This was one of the most magnificent days of my life as a female surgeon representing my country at ACS headquarters. I am grateful to all administrative force of ACS and ASBrS for this extraordinarily important invitation. As I am aware of the fact that NAPBC is one of the world’s premier programs dedicated to improving the quality of care for breast diseases, which is the major aim of my professional life, it was a great honor for me to have the opportunity to visit headquarters in Chicago and attend board meeting. I learned and analyzed the updated 2018 NAPBC standards to compare the standards for a breast care program with ours, in order to achieve the same level of excellence at our institute. After these several days with NAPBC members I discovered the meaning of NAPBC, which is exceptional researches, perfect educational programmes, eager to upgrade standards via discussing and criticizing every detail and multidisciplinary breast cancer care. I also discovered the mission of NAPBC, which is to improve quality of breast cancer care by means of standard-setting, scientific validation, and patient and professional education. All of which provides medical excellence. I thank all board members to give me the chance to witness their talent about state of the art of breast care. NAPBC standards that serve as a platform for multidisciplinary approach, designed to create individualized treatment options, I believe, is the issue to win the battle against breast cancer.

On 18th of June, I visited Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Center located in Prentice Women’s Hospital. I observed the inpatient suits, radiology department, intervention rooms and chemotherapy units, all of which were really inspiring for me to make specific modifications at our institute. I would like to thank to Dr. Nora M. Hanse and Dr. Sarah Friedewald for accompanying, giving information and answering my questions about Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Center. I would like to send my great thanks and gratitude to Dr. Winchester and Miss M. Asa Carter for their extraordinary hospitality during this tour and my visit to Chicago. I also visited Evanston Hospital and Breast Center and had the great opportunity talk with Dr. Yao about my research ideas. I am grateful to Dr. Yao for accompanying me and sparing time with me in her very busy schedule. We discussed various research projects with Dr. Yao on which we are in touch currently. During my visit to ACS headquarters one of the most remarkable point I need to report that the opportunity to work with NAPBC data file. I
am greatly impressed by the history of documentation of Committee on Cancer (COC). I had the opportunity to analyze a subject by the help of ACS statistician, which was a very important experience for me to plan a similar program that is essential for documentation in my country.

My Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center experience as a clinical observer was also overwhelming. I was able to participate in all of the educational activities including outpatient clinics, conferences, rounds, seminars, as well as observe in the operating room. All of these experiences shed some valuable light on my approach to surgical oncology.

Last issue to be emphasized for the consideration of ACS for next scholar is that, I had the chance to attend various Breast Cancer Board Meetings in MSKCC and it was useful. We have been organizing weekly Breast Cancer Board Meetings at our institute since 2008, but I believe, observing another centers’ experience is of paramount importance for increasing quality of care.

Since every woman around the world has the right to get accurate approach and deserves qualified care, as a physician my aim is to focus on improving breast care in my country. From this standpoint, the tremendous experiences I gained from this scholar made me discover the main issues to be modified at our breast center and demonstrated the importance of documentation and standardization on the quality of care in the current era of personalized medicine. One of the most important reasons that I applied for this distinguished scholarship was to have the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the ASBrS, which was the most important annual meeting, gathering masters of breast surgery together with an extensive list of novel presentations and possessing the potential to guide breast cancer management, I got full advantage of attending every course and session possible which provided different perspectives to me. The opportunity to meet pioneers of breast surgery and to listen their lectures about lifelong experiences shed very valuable light on my personal and academic vision.

To conclude, my goals and learning objectives from this scholar was fully accomplished. It was a great honor to see state-of-the-art science of masters of breast
cancer treatment. I believe, the knowledge and experience I gained will have an impact on my breast cancer treatment approach and I hope, my international contacts will help young Turkish surgeons to have opportunity to collaborate with international colleagues in the future. It would be a great pleasure and honor for me to design a bridge between continents to share knowledge of qualified breast care with next generation Turkish physicians and to guide them how they could be involved to ACS family to improve themselves and quality of surgical care.

I would like to send my special thanks to Dr. Winchester, Dr. Yao, Dr. Sarantou, Dr. Chen and Dr. Mendez for their guidance, mentorship and hospitality. I would also like to thank Miss Kate Early, Miss M. Asa Carter, Miss Mara Lang and Miss Karen Taubert-Boone for all their patience, kindness, hospitality and help.

Sincerely yours’
Guldeniz Karadeniz Cakmak, MD, FACS, FEBS