

# *A walk in the park* with **Prof. Tito Torralba**

**Saturday morning, 22 October 2022**

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One's knowledge in the practice of medicine is endlessly enriched by each clinical encounter. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2022, no other than Prof. Emeritus Tito P. Torralba, a pillar in Philippine Rheumatology, took us for a “walk in the park” to share interesting, unique case vignettes. Each person in the virtual audience – young and old, amateur and seasoned – was practically held in awe listening to every word and glued to the monitor, as Prof. Torralba shared each case in his own special collection.

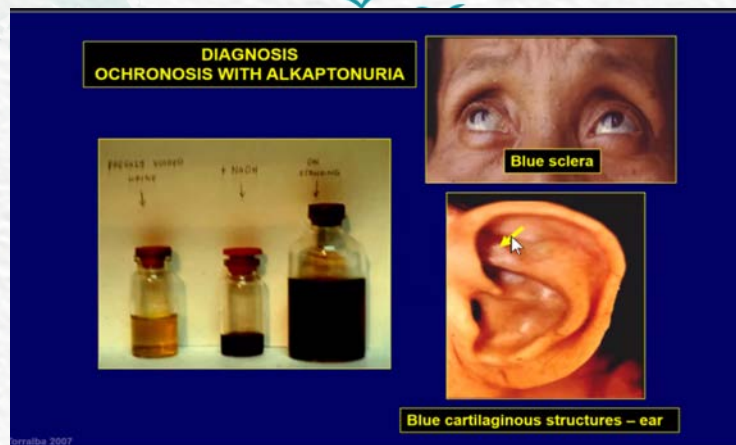


Particularly striking and curious was the case of a woman with discoid lupus lesion on the right arm, and concomitant epidermoid or squamous cell carcinoma on the other arm. There have been sporadic reports of neoplastic changes in discoid lupus erythematosus with incidence rate ranging from 3.3-3.4%. Risk factors include age more than 40 years, male sex, sun exposure, skin pigmentation and chronic inflammation.

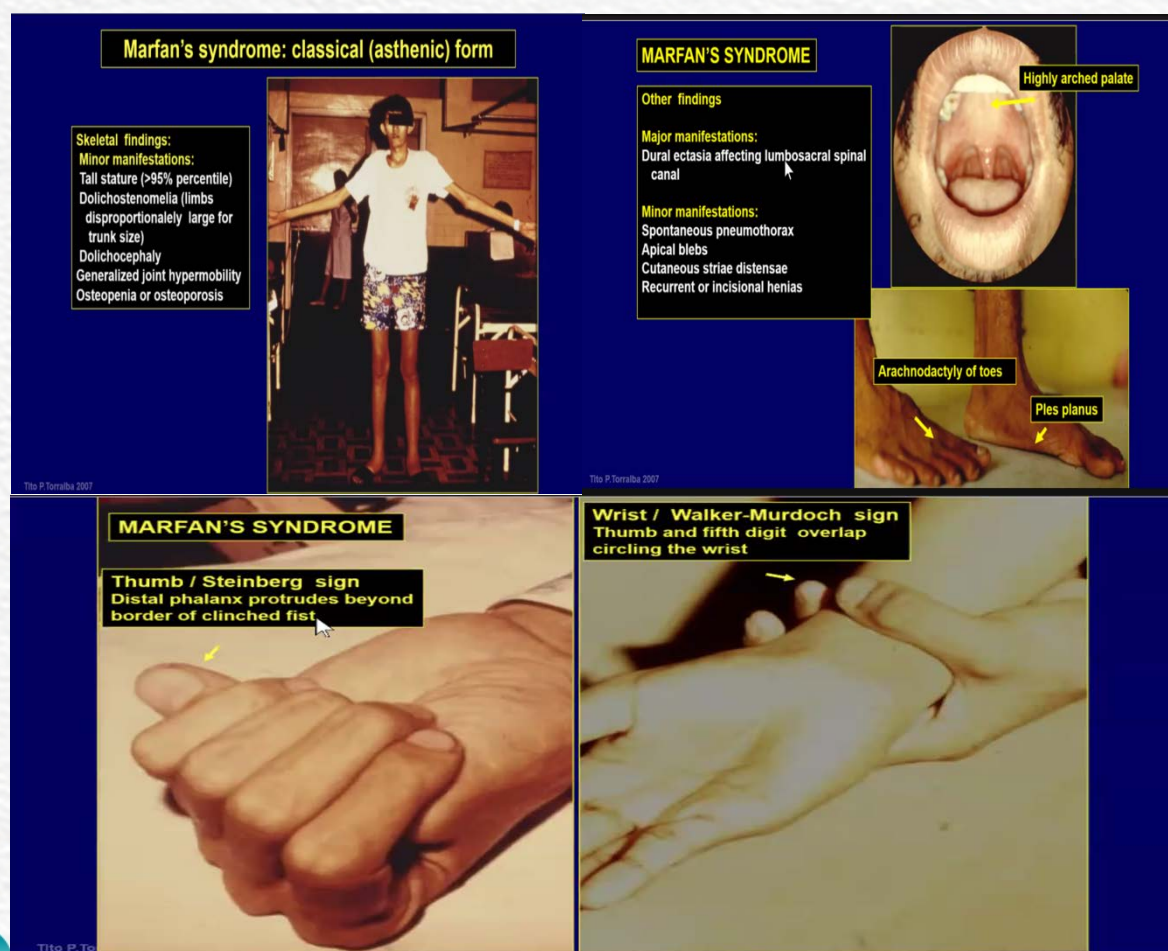




A blue sclera and a blue cartilaginous structure in the ear is indeed intriguing. This turned out to be a case of ochronosis with alkaptonuria. Ochronotic pigmentation is caused by homogentisic acid and is the key event in alkaptonuria. Alkaptonuria is a rare genetic disorder in which there is a deficiency of the enzyme homogentisic acid oxidase, this cause the blue-black discoloration of the skin and cartilage.



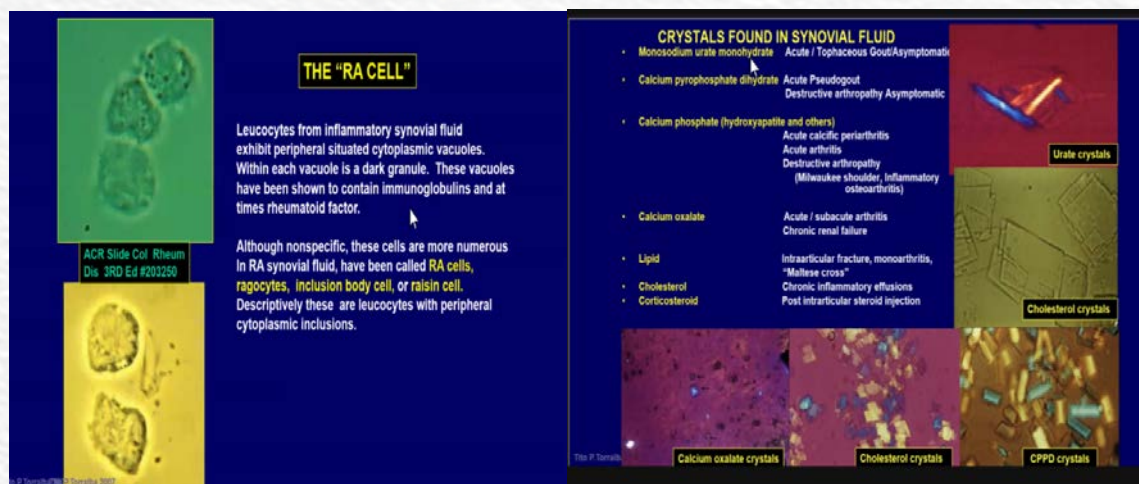
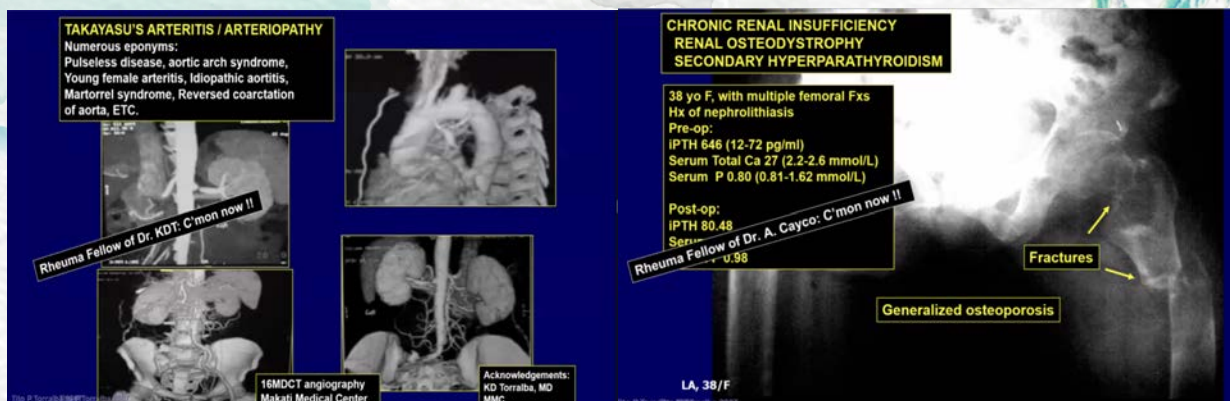
Another of Prof. Torralba's precious collection was the case of **Mr. Gentle Giant**. Here is an image of a tall and thin male who has Marfan's syndrome and has a series of rheumatologic conditions like osteopenia, pes planus and generalized joint hypermobility. The *Steinberg* (also known as the 'thumb sign') and *Walker- Murdoch* signs illustrated below are clinical examination tests for Marfan's disease involving the hands.



Other vignettes that the Professor walked us through included Takayasu's arteritis, renal



osteodystrophy in 38- year old female with secondary hyperthyroidism, the historical concept of **ragocyte** or 'R.A cell', colorful crystals found in synovial fluids, keratoderma blennorrhagicum in a patient with reactive arthritis and psoriasis with segmental spondylitic changes.



A lively discussion with open forum ensued, one comment which stood out was regarding how Prof. Torralba was able to successfully perform needle arthrocentesis on the hip without ultrasound guidance! Certainly, only an expert and experienced clinician with a perfect knowledge in anatomy, plus the "power of touch" should be able to do so.

Indeed, becoming a master of one's art is achieved only with time, diligence, self-directed learning and experience with every patient encounter no matter how trivial. It is for this reason that we all remain students of medicine, fortunate to have our beloved mentor Prof. Tito P. Torralba walking and guiding us through the park of learning... **C'mon now!**