

TWJ Short Fellowship - Observership at the Causse Clinic and 19th International Course in Middle Ear Surgery and Hearing Restoration

Sunil Sharma, ST8 ENT

I was very fortunate to have been granted the opportunity to attend the Causse clinic in Béziers, France, in June 2017 on a TWJ Short Fellowship. Being in the latter stages of my training it has been an ideal time to undertake this short fellowship, having an opportunity to meet surgeons from countries as far and wide as Australia, Canada, the USA, India, Bangladesh, Portugal, Germany and of course France.

The early part of my fellowship was spent observing the French otologists in the Causse clinic. Robert Vincent is world-renowned for having the largest case series of stapes surgery in the world, and watching such a gifted surgeon was a real privilege. He was able to provide his own tips and pearls of wisdom, which I will be certain to adopt in my own practice. Overall, I was impressed by how similarly we carry out middle ear surgery compared to the French. There were, however, some important differences such as the use of the diode laser in France, compared to the KTP laser in the UK, the use of vein grafts in all stapes surgery in France, routine use of CT imaging pre-operatively in all cases in France, and the use of a speculum holder for permeal surgery in France.

The differences between the French and British healthcare systems were also evident. Surgeons were treated in high esteem in France, often with the patient lying strapped, draped and prepped for long periods of time awaiting the arrival of the surgeon, whilst he was seeing patients in clinic. One anaesthetist was often looking after several anaesthetised patients, and the scrub staff were so well trained that they could also help the anaesthetist with monitoring the patient. The presence of wine and gourmet food at lunch meant that all staff in the clinic were content and morale was always high – perhaps we could learn from this in the National Health Service!

The latter part of the Fellowship was spent attending the middle ear surgery and hearing restoration course. This was a great opportunity to have friendly discussion in a relaxed environment, as well as watch some live surgery. Particular highlights included the ‘Grand Inquisitions’ on ossiculoplasty and hearing rehabilitation, as well as some thoroughly enlightening talks on the management of tympanic membrane retractions and vestibulopathy.

The first evening of the course was spent in a lovely restaurant with gourmet French food and plenty of fine wine and champagne, with a great live band. The second evening was spent at a reception hosted by none other than the owner of the clinic at his own château in beautiful surroundings.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful to the TWJ Foundation for this amazing opportunity. I would thoroughly recommend it for a senior otology trainee or

young consultant looking to learn new techniques in a relaxed environment, with the opportunity to hear different opinions from very experienced otologists from across the world.