

TWJ Short Fellowship Report: Causse Ear Clinic June 25-30th 2018

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I was delighted to be awarded funding from the TWJ Foundation to attend the Causse Ear clinic. As a relatively new consultant Otologist, I was keen to consolidate my knowledge, particularly with regards to ossiculoplasty, and to learn some new skills that I could potentially apply with my own patients. The first 3 days were spent observing the work of Professor Robert Vincent and his colleague Dr Thibaud Dumon in theatre. Following this I attended the 20th International Causse Otology Course. The Causse clinic is an internationally recognised institution in Otology and resides in the small town of Colombiers, just outside Béziers. The faculty were incredibly warm and welcoming to delegates and the social programme took full advantage of the Languedoc region's wonderful scenery and food and drink.

Observership

During my short observership I observed several surgeries in theatre including primary and revision tympanoplasty, stapedotomy, revision VSB and combined approach tympanoplasty. Watching such experienced otologists at work made the surgery seem quite effortless, although many were tough revision cases referred on from colleagues from far and wide. All patients' audiograms were posted above the operating table and their cases discussed throughout the surgery. The optics in theatre were awesome and allowed an excellent view of proceedings and both surgeons were happy to answer questions throughout their cases.

I was very impressed by the theatre set up, with the patient strapped to the table and prepared and draped by the scrub nurse before the surgeon even entered theatre. Every member of the team seemed to know their role and the scrub nurse worked seamlessly with the surgeon, passing instruments before they were even asked for and anticipating each step.

Most middle ear surgery performed by Professor Vincent is done permealately using a speculum holder, with the head rotated so that the middle ear is perpendicular to the plane of view of the microscope. This is something I am keen to adopt after seeing the excellent access that can be obtained. Haemostasis was outstanding – likely due to excellent surgical technique and good infiltration but also probably helped significantly by the hypotensive anaesthetic technique that seemed to be universally employed by the Causse Clinic anaesthetists.

It was useful to learn some new techniques such as malleus repositioning to aid with ossiculoplasty and stapedotomy as well as Professor Vincent's overlay technique for large anterior or superior perforations. There were approximately 10 other Otologists also observing from other countries including India, Portugal and Brazil and it was fascinating to compare and contrast our respective practices whilst watching the cases.

20th International Causse Otology Course

The course consisted of three days of lectures combined with live operating and also a lively round-table discussion of clinical cases each day. It was fascinating to listen to world-renowned Otologists debating various cases, and also reassuring for a young Otologist like me to realise there is often no one correct way to do things! The lectures covered a broad range of topics including otosclerosis, stapedectomy, ossiculoplasty, cholesteatoma surgery, middle ear implants and endoscopic ear surgery. There was ample opportunity for audience interaction and also time to engage with the several sponsoring manufacturers during coffee breaks to review their various ossiculoplasty products. I found Professor Vincent's lecture on choice of ossiculoplasty technique depending upon Kartoush classification particularly helpful, and was very impressed by his results with the malleus replacement prosthesis which he has developed for use in cases where there is no residual malleus. It was also useful to hear a round-table discussion of the various types of ossicular prostheses which each panel member would employ in the various cases that were represented.

Summary

Overall the short visiting Fellowship was incredibly valuable and I have learnt many new skills which I hope to be able to put into practice back home with my own patients. I feel much more confident in my use of ossicular prostheses and in the various types and applications of the prostheses available on the market. I have learned some helpful hints for tympanoplasty as well as some useful tips for dealing with difficult mastoids. I am incredibly grateful to the TWJ Foundation for their support in facilitating the visit and would wholeheartedly recommend the experience to other Otologists.