

## **TWJ Short Fellowship Report**

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I feel very fortunate to have received this prestigious TWJ Foundation Short Fellowship. The Fellowship allowed me to attend the famous Nijmegen Ear surgery course, now running in its 54<sup>th</sup> year, and also spend a week observing the Otolaryngology team at the Radboud UMC in Nijmegen.

### **54<sup>th</sup> Nijmegen Ear Surgery Course**

The first part of the Fellowship was spent attending the Nijmegen Ear Course. I had been told by colleagues who had attended the course previously that this was one of the best advanced otology courses and I am pleased to say that I was not left disappointed. The five-day programme was intense, starting at 8am and finishing around 6pm daily with an equally busy social agenda running alongside. The faculty consisted of enthusiastic local surgeons including Professor Jeff Mulder, Dr Ronald Pennings, Professor Emmanuel Mylanus, Professor Dirk Kunst and Dr Myrtle Hol, together with well-known otologists from across Europe. Some distinguished names amongst them included, Professor Thomas Zahnert, Professor Shakeel Saeed, Dr Thomas Somers and Dr Maurizio Falcioni. The days consisted of key lectures, live surgical demonstrations, temporal bone dissection and interesting debates spanning a variety of otology and skull base topics. Over the course of the week numerous areas were covered including reconstruction of the tympanic membrane, subtotal petrosectomy, ossiculoplasty, canalplasty, vestibular schwannoma, stapes surgery, facial paralysis and skull base pathology to name but a few. The course atmosphere was one that encouraged healthy debate with ample time to ask questions throughout the day. There were lively discussions generated around the management of cholesteatoma, having moved on from the classic canal wall up versus canal wall down question to the issue of cavity obliteration. There were also live surgical demonstrations daily, including transmissions in 3D and a chance to ask questions both during the sessions and afterwards in the 'meet the surgeon' part of the programme. We also had two and half hours of temporal bone dissection on four days of the course. This was an excellent chance to put some of the techniques

discussed into practice in a well-equipped lab with faculty support and technical assistance when required.

The yearly W.F.B Brinkmann lecture was delivered by Professor Erwin Officiers from the European Institute for ORL-HNS in Antwerp, on the thought-provoking topic of evidence-based medicine or experience-based decision making. He gave a personal view on the topic and reflected on his vast wealth of experience and those who had influenced him the most during his career. This was followed by the opportunity for faculty and delegates to continue the discussions into the evening over dinner. A special feature this year was a temporal bone lab demonstration of the RoBoSculpt, an operation robot which is currently being developed in Eindhoven designed to have the capability of image-guided drilling of the temporal to sub-millimetric precision. This definitely left us all with food for thought regarding the future of otological surgery.

### **Clinical Observership**

The second part of the Fellowship was spent on a clinical observership with two other senior trainees from the UK: Nishchay Mehta and Nikul Amin. The week was spent in theatre with Professor Mylanus, Dr Kunst and Dr Abma. We observed a number of interesting cases including revision mastoidectomy with obliteration, superior semicircular canal dehiscence repair and subtotal petrosectomy. The technique of cavity obliteration had been discussed at length on the course, so it was good to see it being performed from start to finish, first hand. All of the surgeons were keen to teach and pass on their expertise. Professor Mylanus in particular, had an infectious enthusiasm and energy for otology and always took time to answer our questions and explain techniques in detail. The local surgeons and theatre staff were all extremely welcoming and made us feel at home.

The time spent in Nijmegen provided an excellent opportunity to improve my knowledge in several areas of otological practice. As a final year trainee, it was definitely the right time for me to attend the course and undertake the observership. The course provided a different outlook on several topics and encouraged me to think laterally. The observership enabled me to see the techniques discussed being put into practice. Overall, I feel that I have learnt a great deal and acquired a huge array of tips and techniques from a surgical perspective which I look forward to implementing in the future. I am very grateful to the TWJ Foundation for affording me this opportunity and to the team at Radboud UMC for this incredible learning experience.



A photo with Professor Mylanus



In the temporal bone dissection lab