

CWJ Short Fellowship Report: Causse Ear Clinic **27th June – 2nd July 2022**

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As a first-year consultant, I was keen to advance my journey of continuous learning in otologic surgery and expand my horizons. Throughout my training, I had enjoyed watching and learning from the work performed by the group from Causse Ear Clinic. I am therefore very grateful to the TWJ Foundation for providing the opportunity for me to visit the world-renowned Causse Ear Clinic and attend the 22nd International Otology Course. I spent a week at the Causse Ear Clinic, with 3 days' pre-course observership and subsequent 3 days attending the course. Professor Robert Vincent was such a gracious host, welcoming us to the department and ensuring that we were well looked after.

On my first day, I observed Prof Vincent manage sudden sensorineural hearing loss, and perform primary and revision stapes surgery. The ceiling-mounted microscope appeared to work really well, perfectly positioned for each case and an economical use of theatre space. The chemistry between the team members was impressive; Prof Vincent has been working with the same scrub nurse and anaesthetist for decades. The advantage of having a consistent team was clear to see, with patients prepped and ready before Prof Vincent arrives, and consistent hypotensive anaesthesia for all patients: operations were performed seamlessly, and instruments were passed in anticipation with minimal prompting. The stapes operation took less than half an hour. I was also impressed with the use of a pedal-controlled suction device, where a foot pedal could control the suction and its intensity. The ossiculoplasty and tympanoplasty operations I observed were performed using the permeal approach, with an excellent view of the middle ear. The key was a large selection of different sized speculums and a well-designed speculum holder.

There were approximately 10 of us at the pre-course visit and I really enjoyed the discussions and exchange of experience with colleagues who were visiting from all over the world. We also had small group discussions with Prof Vincent about difficult cases and he also shared with us the results from his huge series of patients. His passion in obtaining excellent hearing outcomes for patients, sharing his journey in designing and improvising his own prosthesis was infectious. I also spent time with Prof Thibaud Dumon in theatre, one of the senior otologists at Causse who manages the cholesteatoma cases.

The course was a mix between lectures, panel discussions and live surgery. The first day was dedicated to stapes surgery, followed by a day on ossiculoplasty and the final day on cholesteatoma. I really enjoyed the lecture by Prof Vincent on the malleus repositioning technique and the malleus replacement prosthesis as these techniques were novel to me. The lectures were then brought to life as Prof Vincent subsequently performed live surgeries demonstrating the techniques and prostheses discussed. I felt this style of lectures with live surgeries was unique and highly engaging. We were able to ask questions during the procedure and all sessions were interactive with audience participation actively sought.

The course faculty was diverse, with Prof Jose Carlos Casqueiro a proponent of endoscopic ear surgery, and we had a lively debate about the pros and cons of this technique versus the permeal approach. I also enjoyed the talk from Prof Miguel

Aristegui, also from Madrid, as he shared his experience managing complex cases. Mr Chris Aldren and Mr John Oates from the UK were superb in guiding the discussions and shared lots of practical tips that I found very useful.

One of my main take-home messages was, reassuringly, that there is no single 'right' way of doing things. The key is to keep a database of all cases and monitor outcomes. Prof Vincent utilises the Otology-Neurotology Database (ONDB) where he was able to pull results from the thousands of operations he has performed to share with us during the meeting. I have been inspired by the passion of the faculty and delegates alike for ear surgery and the pursuit of optimal hearing outcomes.

Overall, I had a really enjoyable week and had learnt tips and pearls that I will be incorporating into my clinical practice including the utilisation of the ONDB software. I am very grateful to the TWJ Foundation for this opportunity and would highly recommend a visit to this incredible unit.



