

## CWJ Short Fellowship Report

Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, The Netherlands – April 2024

James Howard

My sincere thanks to the TWJ Foundation for facilitating my attendance at the 57<sup>th</sup> Nijmegen Temporal Bone Course and subsequent one-week Observership.

The weather welcomed us to Nijmegen with chilly winds and intermittent drizzle: however, the welcome from the faculty and local department was quite the reverse throughout the course and subsequent Observership. Fortunately the weather improved with blue skies and 20 degrees in the second week.

The course itself is over 5 days, 4 of which feature drilling in the afternoon. The days started with lectures followed by live surgery on an excellent variety of otological procedures that were streamed in 3D to the venue. Cases included stapedectomy, combined approach tympanoplasties, subtotal petrosectomy with blind sac closure, cochlear implant, bone conduction implants (BAHA and Osia), canalplasty and middle fossa approach. All cases were performed by international experts and local faculty. After the live surgery there was another lecture prior to lunch and then the afternoon was spent drilling prior to a short final lecture. The evenings had a well organised social program with varied meals on most days, and transport was organised from the hotel to the hospital and any social venues. Wednesday evening included the Brinkman lecture given by Professor Per Cayé-Tomasen with details of some of the work he had done over his career.

Each delegate gets 2 temporal bones to drill over the period of the course as they see fit. The equipment is good, and there were plentiful and experienced international faculty members to help with any queries and advice regarding the dissection. Industry representatives were present with a full range of PORPs and TORPs for practice as desired. The temporal bone guide covers basics up to advanced procedures with good explanations. There is also a supplement guide in 3D (with stylish green and red glasses included) that, once I got over my initial scepticism, proved surprisingly helpful. I understand there are plans to introduce an endoscopic component (both lectures and practical) to next year's course which I think will add a valuable aspect to a high-level course.

The Observership was in the second week, starting with a departmental meeting at 8am each day to discuss patients, followed by clinic or theatre. Unfortunately, our timetable was altered due to illness, but the team went to great lengths to find alternative options for us. We were welcome in all theatres and the procedures were varied. Clinics included general otology presentations including otosclerosis, as well as specialist clinics for cochlear implants and bone conduction devices – all included both new presentations and troubleshooting problems.

Nijmegen itself is a lovely city - the oldest in The Netherlands - not too large and with a very pleasant historic centre. The Dutch national holiday King's Day (celebrating the monarch's birthday) happened whilst we were there resulting in our day trip to Utrecht being crowned

with celebrations in the parks and streets! We also enjoyed a very pleasant paddle on the canals in kayaks, and the following day hired bikes to cycle around Amsterdam (obligatory for any trip to The Netherlands).

Overall, it was an excellent course with friendly and knowledgeable faculty, good equipment and drilling, and a warm department willing to facilitate observers. I picked up numerous operative tips and nuggets from patient discussions, would recommend the Short Fellowship to others, and am very grateful that I could attend.

