

TWJ Short Fellowship report 2024

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As a first-year consultant with a primary interest in otology, I had the honour to have the opportunity to attend the prestigious Causse Clinic for a 2-week observership.

I arrived in Colombiers full of enthusiasm and stayed at one of the recommended hotels by the course organiser. On the first day, we were warmly greeted by Dr Robert Vincent himself, who explained our schedule. Over two weeks, I had the privilege of observing a variety of surgeries performed by Dr Vincent and Dr Thibaud Dumon. These talented surgeons and innovators were also excellent teachers to the observers and their nurses.

In the **pre-course** days, I had the pleasure of meeting colleagues from Singapore, India, the UK, Spain, and Brazil. We exchanged opinions on different cases and techniques and discussed the differences in our medical systems. We also formed great friendships. Our mentor, Dr Vincent, took good care of us, encouraged discussions, and welcomed our questions.

I observed unique surgeries and techniques, including stapes surgeries with different prostheses developed by Dr Vincent (such as malleus replacement prosthesis, TORP with silastic stapes banding), incus repositioning, ossiculoplasty, total tympanic membrane replacement, different middle ear implants, removal of an Esteem implant, cholesteatoma surgeries, and endolymphatic duct ligation. Each surgeon shared their unique techniques and tips, and I enjoyed observing these surgeries live, although Dr Vincent's videos were very detailed.

They pay close attention to every detail of the surgery, starting with the positioning of the patient. Their tables can adjust and position the patient's ear canal perpendicular to the floor, providing a direct view of the stapes footplate. The ceiling-mounted microscope allows ample space in the operating room, and the two large wall-mounted screens project high-quality images for everyone to observe. The vein harvested at the beginning of the surgery is crucial in stapes surgery. I observed how the speculum holder can improve the middle ear approach. There was a strong emphasis on ergonomics, which is sometimes overlooked by surgeons.

Every middle ear has a unique anatomy, but the expertise of the surgeons makes even the most difficult cases seem easy and straightforward to resolve. The techniques of incus relocation, TORP with stapes silastic banding, and malleus replacement prosthesis were particularly intriguing to me, as I had not seen them being performed live before. Witnessing these surgeons at work during each surgery is absolutely fascinating. The discussions on different techniques, approaches, or materials were very stimulating and useful. The nurses were friendly, helpful, and patient with all our questions.

I was really impressed by the teamwork and performance. Not only were the patients all ready when the surgeons arrived in the operating theatre, but the nurses also handed over the instruments flawlessly, anticipating the next steps as they observed the surgery in detail. Working with the same team, including the anaesthetist, all the time truly made a difference in performance and ultimately in the patients' outcome. There were minimal interruptions in the theatre. These aspects are missing in both HSE and NHS. This model of practice made me consider what I could change in my theatre to be more efficient.

The **24th International otology course** was a fantastic success, with faculty and delegates from all over the world. It included a perfect mix of lectures, live surgeries, and round table debates, all backed by evidence-based results. Each day began with breakfast in the cafeteria, followed by live surgeries, lunch, a scientific program, and coffee breaks for socializing. The high-quality lectures were presented by renowned otologists from the UK, Germany, Spain, Monaco, USA, Brazil, and, of course, France. The discussion panel members were excellent and I learned a lot from their experiences. I will utilize the tips I learned on different middle ear implants and prosthesis, ossiculoplasty, cholesteatoma surgery, endoscopy, tympanoplasty, and cavity obliteration. I won't disclose these hints since they are only available in the Causse course. This experience has greatly added to my knowledge and will influence my practice.

I was impressed to learn about the improved outcomes of Dr Vincent's stapes surgery when he stopped using the LASER. He backed up his results with his well-structured and user-friendly database found on ONDB.org, and I am interested in using it. Dr Vincent's presentation skills surpassed any medical talks I have seen so far. He captivated and engaged the audience not only with high-quality data but also with his state-of-the-art videos.

The course dinner took place in an amazing location with live music, where faculty and delegates sang and danced into the night. A shuttle bus was organized to and from the venue.

During my **second week** of observership, I was privileged to witness more surgeries performed by both surgeons, received answers to my questions, and learned a lot of otology tricks. I have gained confidence in trying new approaches and techniques, which will help me improve patient surgical outcomes.

I am grateful to the TWJ Foundation, the course organizers, and the entire faculty, especially Dr Robert Vincent and Dr Thibaud Dumon, for this valuable opportunity. The Causse otology course emphasizes friendships, sharing experiences, and learning. I am excited about attending the course again soon.

Location, transport, and other useful info:

I flew to Carcassonne and had a car for two weeks so that I could explore the area after my daily schedule. I decided to stay in Colombiers. In the afternoon, I had the chance to enjoy the beautiful beach at Valras-Plage, which was only 25 minutes away. During my stay, I visited Carcassonne Castle, Toulouse, the 9 locks of Canal du Midi (Les 9 Ecluses de Fonsèranes), and the charming Saint-Guilhem-le-Desert. On the third day, the course only lasted half a day. On Monday, there were no surgeries, so I had time to visit the picturesque Pyrenees, Andorra, the fascinating Salvador Dali's memorial house in Cadaquès, Girona, and back via Leucate. Occitanie and Catalonia are well known for their beauty, and there is much more to explore. I would highly recommend renting a car, even for a few days, for anyone doing the observership as there is much to explore around Colombiers according to everyone's preferences.

Please be aware that for the course (Thursday-Saturday), there is a free shuttle bus organized in the mornings and evenings from Beziers to the clinic. Otherwise, you can only travel by taxi from Beziers (a 20-euro trip). You could share the taxi with the pre-course delegates.