

Nijmegen Ear Surgery Course

6-10th February 2017

I was extremely fortunate to have been sponsored by the Thomas Wickham-Jones (TWJ) Foundation to attend the 52nd Nijmegen Ear Surgery Course and to observe the following week. The course was held in the prestigious Radboud University Medical Centre in Nijmegen, Netherlands, and consisted of lectures, live surgery and temporal bone dissection. The faculty were a source of inspiration giving pearls of wisdom amongst lively debate.

The live surgery was a highlight including subtotal petrosectomy, canal wall up mastoidectomy for cholesteatoma with cavity obliteration, ossiculoplasty, stapedotomy, canalplasty, cochlear implant, bone-anchored hearing aid and, for me, a rare opportunity to see the middle ear transducer device implanted. These were made especially vivid by the 3D video transmission to the lecture theatre. There were plenty of challenges for the surgeons with tegmen defects, sigmoid sinus exposure as well as fielding questions from the audience.

There were some fascinating insights into the physiology of the middle ear/ ossicular chain which are applicable to tympanoplasty surgery. This was complemented extremely well by the Brinkman Lecture given by Robert Vincent (from the Causse Clinic in Béziers, France) with his enormous experience in stapes surgery.

In the afternoon we had the chance to put into practice the techniques seen in live surgery during the temporal bone dissection session. The lab was extremely well equipped with no apparent need for technical support (always an indicator of work behind the scenes).

The social programme allowed further discussion on the life of an ENT surgeon across Europe, but also Iraq, Kuwait and Tanzania as well as the opportunity to sample Dutch cuisine and drinks.

The following week I was able to stay and observe together with my co-recipient of TWJ sponsorship (Andrew Hall). I was overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of the Nijmegen team as well as the availability of free proper coffee. Attending clinics gave an insight into the complex and interesting cases referred to them. I was slightly embarrassed by the vast gap in language skills between the Dutch and myself, but I did manage to pick up some phrases such as “You can drive a bus through that” (referring to the ear canal).

Three whole days in theatre allowed me to see more surgery, this time even closer to the action, with several cochlear implants, cholesteatoma surgery and an interesting case of bilateral mastoid granulomatous mastoiditis.

On the last day was a PhD defense; a very formal affair with pomp and ceremony and fortunately the summary booklet was in English.

I had a wonderful 2 weeks and am very grateful for this opportunity. There are innumerable tips that will filter in to my practice as well as the general enthusiasm for otology and teaching. Despite the British/European political upheavals I was struck very much by what united everyone on the course; a common love of otology.

I would like to express my appreciation to the TWJ Foundation and all the people at the Radboud UMC for their generosity.

Juliet Meldrum