

## **TWJ Short Fellowship Report**

**Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, Netherlands February 2018**

**Mr Amir Farboud Specialty Registrar ST8 ENT Surgery Wales deanery**

This report covers my experience on the Nijmegen Ear Surgery course.

My reasoning for attending this course was to further my knowledge and understand where I had gone wrong with a recent case where I had caused a significant complication. I wanted to understand where I could improve by learning from the best.

The first thing I noticed on the course was that there weren't many Residents/Registrars there, it was all consultants! That was slightly daunting, but as a senior trainee, I felt I had a more than adequate grasp of the subject matter. This was an informed audience, and the discussions at the end of each session were lively and full of difficult questions for the faculty. Their knowledge and experience was really tested.

The live surgery was a bit hit and miss from my point of view, on one hand I was immersed in a 3D experience of live middle ear surgery which was a novelty, on the other hand, it would have been good if there was some performed using endoscopes and in High Definition. There was no use of an endoscope throughout the course. As an advocate of this type of surgery, I felt this was an area where the course could be improved, and I'm sure it will become an adopted technique in the future, discussion such was the level of expertise at this course.

The knowledge and experience of the faculty was nothing short of astonishing. All the faculty made themselves available for discussion in and out of the lecture room and at the many dinners we attended (we only had one night off to explore Nijmegen). Of course I tended to gravitate to my UK peers, but I would often find myself sitting with people from all over Europe and the world at lunch and dinner discussing healthcare systems, operative practice, demographic and socioeconomic differences. The subject of Brexit came up a lot. I found myself discussing what Brexit will mean, the impact on our healthcare system and the wider picture – the socioeconomic impact and how it will affect the environment. I was very much aligned with the opinion of my European counterparts, that Brexit would be bad for Healthcare and collaboration.

The city of Nijmegen is a beautiful example of Dutch engineering and social bliss. Everyone happily buzzes around on their bicycles (the whole country is flat). There is a very wide river to cross every day on the way to the hospital which makes for dramatic scenery. The city was largely rebuilt after WWII, and so the architecture is mostly modern. The city is very clean and safe. It's a University town and so has that young vibrant atmosphere which is good. We did sample the nightlife on several occasions and it was enjoyable.

The temporal bone drilling was something else altogether. I somehow found myself on an operating microscope that was better than what I used in the University teaching hospital (a stroke of random luck – it turned out, I had gravitated to the best equipment in the room). The drills were all state of the art and the setup was using the best kit available. The specimens were all prepared by the Dutch local residents to save time and I was given a 3D booklet and glasses as a step by step guide which

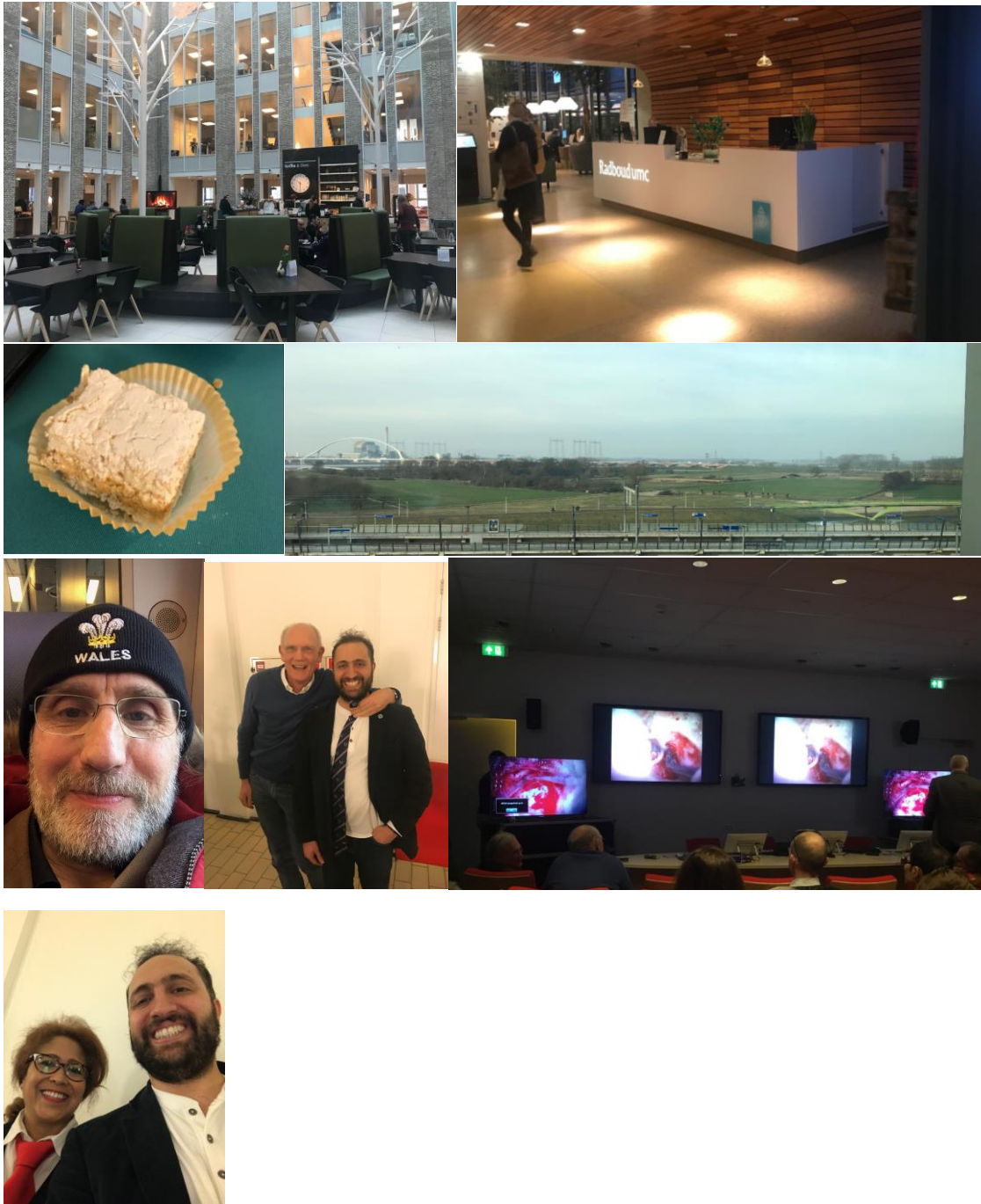
made things interesting. The sessions were 2 hours long and there were 4 in total. This meant quite a lot of frenetic activity initially, which then calmed down once the bone was drilled and dissection objectives met. The faculty constantly circulated, gave advice, answered questions and offered support and help. The technical staff were fantastic also. It was a very positive experience and really helped me understand the decision making process, and how I had got it wrong previously.

The lectures from the likes of Professors Saeed, Huttenbrink, Caye-Thomassen, Falcioni, Somers and Aschendorff were as good as it gets. These guys are the best at what they do, akin to listening to David Attenborough during live surgery, captivating and mesmerising. These people are on top of their game and are a talented group of individuals that are not afraid to share or to be questioned.

Jeff Mulder and among others, Ronald Pennings, were the local faculty leaders and were just brilliant in making the course run smoothly and kept the whole thing flowing and interesting. The teas and cakes at coffee time were out of this world. Lunch in the hospital felt like it was an upmarket bistro such was the quality of the food and service.

Did I learn much? Yes quite a lot! I got the chance to ask some of the best people in the world why they do the things they do in the way they do them. What materials they use, what landmarks do they go by and why, what was their decision making process and experience that led them to make those choices. One of the Dinners was at the university and was led by a professor on the future of cochlear implant technology. It was a fascinating insight in to the research that is going on in cochlear implants and the use of light energy over electrical energy to stimulate the neural network. It was once again mind bending stuff that was inspiring and captivating. I felt fulfilled at the end of my Nijmegen experience and was sad to leave. I made a new friend from Germany who I gave my ENT UK tie as a show of "entente cordiale", and Professor Falcioni liked my Wales stories so much, he got my Wales rugby woolly hat so that he wouldn't freeze on his commute back to Italy. I would even go as far as attending the course again in the future such was the quality of the lectures and drilling. This is an excellent way of maintaining skills and keeping up to date with techniques and practices.

I would like to thank the TWJ Foundation and to ENT Wales for their sponsorship that contributed to costs of attending this event.



Montage of images from Nijmegen Clockwise from the top left: The cafeteria at Radboud UMC complete with effect fire (it's a TV). Reception at the hospital. Scene from the hotel of the river. Live surgery in 3D. The lady that kept me fed and watered for 5 days, exceptional service. My new German friend with my ENT UK tie as a mark of European unity. Maurizio Falcioni sporting the Wales rugby wooly hat on his train ride home from Nijmegen. An example of something delicious consumed at the coffee interval after a morning session.