

Project Update – Ganga-Ethicon Advanced Fellowship in Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery

July 2018 – Ganga, India

Background

I am currently a consultant in a plastic surgery unit, which comprises of 4 plastic surgeons and 12 trainees. Nationally, there are 18 plastic surgeons in Ethiopia for a population of over 100 million. Our centre provides a comprehensive service for reconstruction, including trauma and head and neck oncology but at present, we are unable to perform routine microvascular reconstruction due to lack of facilities and training.

I was recommended by BFIRST for a fellowship at Ganga Hospital, Coimbatore, India for 6 weeks in July, fully sponsored by Johnson & Johnson called the Ganga-Ethicon Advanced Fellowship in Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery.

My Fellowship Experience

My objectives were to integrate into the plastic surgery department's daily activities, to learn the principles of complex trauma assessment and management, and to complete the microsurgical skills course as part of preparations to introduce microsurgery to Ethiopia.

During my time in Ganga, I integrated with the clinical team and joined their activities during the routine working week of Monday to Saturday. Morning meetings start at 7:30 am. These rotate through a comprehensive program of trauma review of recent cases, lectures by the consultants and seminars by the residents. These provide an excellent teaching and learning framework. After morning meeting, short ward rounds are conducted to assess and evaluate pre- and post-operative patients. The daily clinical work then consists of alternating days of outpatients followed by theater, or all-day theater.

Patients' clinical problems ranged from subacute to chronic cases of different organ systems: hand, upper limb, head and neck, and lower limb. The plastic and maxillofacial operation theatre complex had 5 theatres and on average 3 surgeries were done per day.

I saw hand surgeries from the fingertip injury repair to the most complex cases including fractures, dislocations, wrist instability, defects requiring flap coverage, brachial plexus surgeries including nerve repair, nerve transfers and, tendon transfers. In terms of lower limb trauma, I was exposed to local fasciocutaneous and muscle transfers. I also observed a number of latissimus dorsi, gracilis and anterolateral thigh free flaps. I also observed maxillofacial surgeries, with varying soft tissue defects different fracture patterns Dr Abdurezak Ali Mohammed, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, ALERT Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A) Dr Abdulrezak Ali, Ganga, India



Performing microvascular anastomosis at Ganga Hospital's microsurgical skills course

Educational Support

I found all the consultants, residents and supporting staff very supportive during my stay, which made my fellowship even more fruitful. I am especially indebted to Dr Raja Sabapathy, who gave me unreserved support during my stay at Ganga Hospital. I learnt so much from his decision making, especially in planning surgical techniques and patient evaluation which have allowed such excellent outcomes. More importantly, I learnt so much from his leadership skills, which I have come to appreciate as the main reasons why Ganga has achieved such a high level of quality and to become a world class centre of excellence in plastic surgery.

One of my highlights was the microsurgery course. My experience in the microsurgical skill lab was simply amazing. This was my first experience in microsurgery training using animal models, and also one of the main reasons for coming to Ganga, so that I could have some hands-on experience in microsurgery. I believe I am now better placed to establish a microsurgery service in my country. I look forward one day to fulfilling my dream of offering routine, safe and effective microsurgery to our patients in Ethiopia.

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