

TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP REPORT

GUILDFORD, ROYAL SURREY HOSPITAL, UNITED KINGDOM

It was an honour and privilege to have been the recipient of the ASSA fellowship award to The Royal Surrey Hospital for 4 weeks during September 2018. Looking ahead at a month away from home, family and work, I was anxious to be alone in a place I hadn't travelled to before. The weather was cool at that time, almost like Durban winter. The hospital was located approximately 45 minutes away from central London. Upon arrival, I was greeted warmly by Professor Tim Rockall and his team. I was quickly given an overview of the runnings of the department and was soon integrated into the 'team.'

The experience well exceeded my expectations. There was at least 3 operating slates a week. Occasionally, cases were scheduled for Saturday mornings and after hours. The emphasis of the experience was mainly colorectal surgery. General surgical cases including laparoscopic hernia repairs also featured. The vast majority of surgical cases seen included colorectal malignancies. I was treated to many hemi-colectomies and TME dissections for rectal cancer. In addition to these, I witnessed surgery for rectal prolapse especially in older patients. Professor Rockall is truly an incredible surgeon, teacher and an amazing man. He was always helpful and encouraging and full of advice. The simplicity and humility of Professor Rockall and his team made it easy to work there for the month.

During the month, I also attended a rectal cancer masterclass, ERAS workshop and 2 endometriosis slates with the gynaecologists. MDT meetings were also conducted. In addition to the colorectal experience, I was fortunate to learn general laparoscopic skills and witness first-hand the relationships between trainers and trainees, and, observe the state hospital service of the NHS in a 'first world' country. All these experiences have added immense value to my own skillset, my opinions, my mindset, my attitude and the manner in which I now interact with our registrars back home.

During the weekends, I toured out of Surrey, exploring London and surrounds. Certainly attending an international fellowship not only improves an individual as a surgeon but also broadens horizons in terms of the ways of the world. In total, all these memories come together to make a more well-rounded balanced surgeon.

Once again, it was an absolute honour to be awarded the opportunity. I am eternally indebted to ASSA and Sanofi for this. I would recommend this opportunity to anyone considering the trip I've travelled. London is expensive, relative, to South Africa. The funds made available eased the financial burden and made it possible. I would only suggest that future candidates stay within walking distance of the hospital to save on travelling costs. This was a very memorable month away from home and I will cherish the experience and friendships forever.

Yours faithfully

Dr Ebrahim Mansoor