

Report - EFORT Visiting Fellowship

Zurich & Bad Wildungen
November 2009

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The award of the EFORT Fellowship 2009 allowed me to experience a practical training period at two different European spine centers. In November 2009 I had the opportunity to stay for two weeks at the Wilhelm Schulthess Clinic in Zurich. Both practical training periods, the one in Zurich as well as the one in the "German Scoliosis Center," the Werner-Wicker-Clinik in Bad Wildungen (second part of my travel), are not easy to receive.

On the first day of my study trip I tortured myself through the city of Zurich, interspersed with road works and diversions, and finally managed to be on time for the appointment at 8.00 in the office of the chief's secretary, taking into account the academic quarter of an hour "cum temporare (ct)". After the friendly welcome by the pleasant Italian-Swiss secretary, Dr. Jeszenszky, chief physician of the Spine Center of the clinic, took me in the operating room in order to first show me a correcting spinal fusion from Th4 to L5. Afterwards, a revision surgery was carried out on a patient with previous operative treatment in Greece, by a lumbar PLIF including 3 segments with revision of the spinal canal. With a Luer and a small sharp Cobb elevator he released, in an almost elegantly appearing ease, a metal mesh plate and the scars from the dura. Dr. Jeszenszky has had a crucial influence in the development of specific pedicle screws. During my hospital stay, as one of the earliest adopters, he implanted a new version of a special derotation system committed to dorsal correcting spinal fusions in severe scoliosis. I will keep in mind the chief physician Dr. Jeszenszky as a personality with an international mix of Hungarian humour, Swiss serenity and German precision. One of the most interesting interventions took place a few days later on a patient who suffered from a severe cervical deformity due to a rheumatoid disease, unable to look beyond the horizon. The first attending, Dr. Kleinstueck and chief physician Dr. Jeszenszky corrected the cervical spine using a dorsal correcting spinal fusion from C3 to Th4 with a pedicle subtraction osteotomy of C7 (closing wedge). Impressive was the excellent, both intra- and perioperative interdisciplinary collaboration between surgeons, anaesthesiologists and neurologists. For years, neurologists conduct the multimodal intraoperative monitoring (MIOM), of which they have already acquired a proven expertise. On the last day of my practical training period, during joint operations with the Senior Consultant Prof. Grob, I had the opportunity to experience exciting and interesting discussions about various surgical procedures, including the still not entirely uncontroversial dynamic stabilization procedures at the lumbar spine.

The second part of my journey took me for a week to Bad Wildungen, a small, fine resort, where already famous personalities such as the Russian Czar and Kaiser Wilhelm had stayed before. The area around Bad Wildungen is characterized by its large number of hospitals (acute and rehabilitation facilities). The heart of the famous Werner-Wicker-Clinik is represented by the Department II, the Center for Spinal Surgery "German Scoliosis Center". After the warm reception by the Chief Physician Dr. Meier, an interesting range of surgical procedures was waiting here for me as well. The first day began with two revision surgeries. A 17 year old

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girl was treated by Chief Physician Dr. Meier with a correcting spinal fusion from Th3 - L5. This was followed by a dorsal cervical revision from C0 to Th1, performed by first attending Dr. Ferraris, after he had already finished an anterior spinal fusion from C3 to C6. Always relaxed, Dr. Meier performed even the most difficult surgical procedures with precision, and led the surgical team in an encouraging way.

The Spine Center of the Werner-Wicker-Clinic is not only represented at numerous international conferences and in relevant journals. The team itself has an international cast and the crew has a corresponding fresh, cosmopolitan spirit. In addition to the first attending of Argentine origin, an assistant doctor with Austrian charm and an Arabic-speaking assistant doctor are also part of the team. The Chief Physician Dr. Meier appreciates this, since his clinic is not only visited by patients from Europe, but also to a larger extent from the United Arab Emirates.

For the chance of receiving a practical training period in two renowned hospitals that are both managed by outstanding surgeons, known for their team spirit and the ability to motivate their employees, I would like to sincerely thank the hospitals themselves as well as the orthopaedic institutions DGOOC and EFORT.

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