

Report - EFORT Travelling Fellowship

Italy
04 - 11 October 2009

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Report of the EFORT Travelling Fellowship 04 - 11 October 2009 in Italy

The European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (EFORT) travelling fellowship takes place up to twice a year in different hosting countries. The aim is enhance orthopaedic training, promote the exchange of knowledge as well as team bonding among the various national associations for orthopaedics and traumatology. One trainee is selected from each National Association to attend this week- long programme.

This autumn the hosting country was Italy and the travelling fellowship took place from 04 - 11 October in two historically important cities: Bologna and Verona.

There were 17 trainees from various countries including: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Macedonia and myself from Malta. We were also honoured by the presence of Prof. Dr. Wolfhart Puhl (past EFORT President and current chairman of several EFORT committees) who accompanied us during the first part of our fellowship and who gave us a good insight into EFORT's history and future goals.

Bologna

The first part of our fellowship took place in Bologna, at the Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli. On the first day we were welcomed by Professor Maurilio Marcacci (who happens to be chairman of the Travelling & Visiting Fellowship Committee of EFORT) who gave us an overview of the of the fellowship programme followed by an insight into the history of the Rizzoli Institute.

The Istituto Rizzoli is one of Italy's main Trauma & Orthopaedic Centre, with 324 beds, where 150,000 patients (both Italian as well as foreign) are treated each year. The major areas of treatment and research in the institute are: lower limb joint arthroplasty, sports injuries, foot & ankle disorders, paediatric orthopaedic disease, scoliosis and it is a European centre for treating musculoskeletal tumours (circa 450 patients per year).

There is also a vast musculoskeletal tissue bank which also serves as a reference centre for the whole region (Emilia-Romagna).

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The history of the Institute dates back to the 1896 when it was founded by a famous surgeon from Bologna, Francesco Rizzoli. Later renowned surgeons who became directors of the institute include Professors A. Codivilla and V. Putti. The building itself dates back to the fifteenth century as it had previously been a convent (on a hill of San Michele di Bosco). In fact the inner courtyards and octagonal cloister still give the place an air of tranquillity. The Institute has a library, richly decorated with frescoes dating back to 1517, which holds one of the rarest and complete book collections in orthopaedics (28,000 volumes) and ancient manuscripts dating from the 15th century. Of particular interest is the room which acted as Putti's study which is still left untouched from the 1920's. It holds hundreds of books, collections of ancient surgical instruments and memorabilia.

Lecture Programme

During our visit to Istituto Rizzoli in Bologna we had the opportunity to witness several surgical operations, shown via live link, followed by a series of lectures and power point presentations. Topics included:

Knee

- Treatment of chondral defects in the knee using a synthetic osteoconductive hyaluronic acid scaffold.
- Osteogenic cells, growth factors and scaffolds for bone engineering.
- ACL double bundle repair using an 'over the top' technique.
- An innovative knee resurfacing prosthesis inserted either arthroscopically or via arthrotomy.

Hip

- Uncemented ceramic-on-ceramic hip arthroplasty using mini invasive approach.
- Hip resurfacing.
- Revision hip surgery using uncemented diaphyseal conical fixation prosthesis.

Foot and Ankle

- 'BOX' ankle prosthesis.
- The use of bone allograft-ankle prosthesis composites where bone loss (post traumatic) is present.
- Surgical treatment of flatfoot using bio-resorbable Poly-L-Lactic Acid implant into the sinus tarsi.

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Paediatrics

- Local experience with Ponsetti method of treatment for club foot surgical treatment of club foot.
- Treatment of angular limb deformities.
- Treatment of congenital hip dysplasia

Oncology

- Overview on tumour staging using Enneking classification.
- Surgical margins in tumour excision.
- The use of Allograft- prosthesis composite and bone-allograft substitution in bone and joint reconstruction, and the challengers faced with such applications in paediatric cases.
- Surgical management of spine tumours

Verona

Our second part of the travelling fellowship took part in the Policlinico "GB Rossi" di Borgo Roma, in Verona. This is a large university teaching hospital which houses all medical and surgical specialities and has circa 1300 beds for patients from throughout the Veneto region.

On our arrival to the policlinico on Thursday 8th October, we were welcomed by Profs. Pietro Bartolozzi, Director of Orthopaedics at the hospital (also President of SIOT) who introduced us to his team and gave us an overview of the hospital. During the 2 days visiting Policlinico Borgo Roma we were given numerous presentations regarding the local experience on several topics, including:

Wrist

- Management of DRUJ instability by open and arthroscopic methods

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Shoulder

- Shoulder arthroscopy and treatment of shoulder instability
- Treatment of proximal humerus fractures with Polarus humeral nail

Hip

- Experience in Revision Hip Surgery using tapered, modular, uncemented femoral stem prosthesis.
- 10 year local experience with the Buech- Schneider anti-protrusio cage and massive allograft for the management of peri-prosthetic acetabular bone loss.
- The use of antibiotic- impregnated cement spacer for two-stage revision hip arthroplasty in infected total hip arthroplasty.
- The experimental use of a new porous injectable cement to augment DHS/ proximal femoral nail screw fixation in proximal femoral fracture.

Foot

- Treatment of Hallux Valgus using percutaneous K-wiring technique and treatment of hallux rigidus

Spine

- Treatment of spondylolisthesis

The course of lectures finished with a presentation regarding the local experience of use of 'Orthofix' external fixator in trauma (including calcaneal fractures), in the treatment of osteomyelitis and in correction of leg length and angular deformities.

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Activities & Excursions

Apart from the well prepared educational programme, we were well looked after in both Bologna and Verona throughout our stay courtesy of the Italian Orthopaedic & Traumatology Society (SIOT). In fact we were also privileged with a local tour guide/organiser for the whole trip. The hospitality was superb. The week long fellowship was filled in with numerous dinners and several excursions:

- Dinner at Profs. Maurilio Marcacci's house during our first night in Bologna.
- An afternoon guided city trip to Florence during the third day of our stay.
- A guided tour of Verona.
- Day trip & guided tour of Venice during our last day of stay.

I found the week very interesting and informative. I also enjoyed meeting fellow colleagues from other European countries and learning about their training and health systems. I got a reasonably good idea of what level of training is being provided elsewhere in Europe and how important research is an integral part of such training. We all got on very well as a group. I made numerous friends and contacts and many are hopefully planning to meet up again possibly at the EFORT Fellowship Alumni meeting during the Madrid congress next year.

I would like to thank the Association of Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgeons of Malta for choosing me to be the Maltese fellow and I would also like to thank the Italian Society of Orthopaedics and Traumatology for their warm hospitality and for the very well organised fellowship programme. I am very pleased to have had this experience.

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