

Report - EFORT Travelling Fellowship

Belgium
21 – 27 April 2013

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IMPRESSIONS

From the EFORT Spring Travelling Fellowship 2013 in Belgium

Thinking about the week I spent as a part of the EFORT Travelling Fellowship overwhelms me with beautiful memories and reminiscence.

It was an intense week, full with arrangements and a tight schedule.

I arrived in Brussels Sunday afternoon, around 5 pm. The sky from above seemed cloudy, but when we landed a pleasant sunshine greeted me.

We had the first dinner at a beautiful restaurant "Au Vieux Saint Martin" at Place du Grand Sablon, beautiful architectural square that has houses from the 16th to the 19th century. It is home to antique shops, typical restaurants and chocolateries.

Our hosts, Prof. Dr. Frédéric Schiund and Dr. Luc Van Den Daelen, the presidents of the Royal Belgian Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology and the Belgian Association of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, respectively, greeted us with a warm welcome speech and a delicious apéritif. After we all introduced ourselves, we started a vivid conversation about the orthopaedics and traumatology in our countries, the organization and the evaluation of our residencies our expectations from the fellowship and also we got to know something more about our hosting country. It was a nice icebreaker. After a couple of hours of fine dining, we concluded the conversation and decided to go for a walk. We were all surprised how busy Brussels is on a Sunday night. Then we got back to our hotel rooms, getting ready for the Gent experience.

The next morning we headed towards the Gent University Hospital. We were welcomed by a big hospital that has more than 1000 beds for acute care and extensive services for ambulatory diagnosis, treatment and care. We had a cup of coffee and then entered the operating room.



The team, headed by Prof. Dr. Jan Victor had planned dividing us according to our preferences in three operating rooms. Me and three other colleagues choose the hand surgery operating room. Dr.

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Wim Vanhove had already started an operation of syndactily. That day we also saw release of the carpal tunnel and an interesting evoked potentials examination of plexus brachialis nerves in a patient who had an amputated arm. We also saw a unicompartamental cementless endoprosthetic replacement of the knee, performed by Prof. Dr. Jan Victor. After the lunch, Dr. Catherine Van Der Straeten, the director of research and Prof. Dr. Jan Victor joined us for our presentations. All eleven of us, the fellows, had prepared a short scientific presentation. Now we had the opportunity to get the image for the orthopaedic surgery and traumatology practice and research in Macedonia, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia, Turkey, Romania and United Kingdom.



Dr. Catherine and Prof. Jan had constructive comments and questions. It was a very interesting and enjoyable afternoon. Then, it was time for sightseeing. We had a wonderful guide-toured visit of the center of Gent.

After we learned something more about the economical and architectural development of Gent, our hosts invited us to a dinner in a fancy restaurant named "Domestica". It was a cozy evening full with appetizing talks and relish meals. Afterwards we headed towards our rooms in Brussels. Leuven was waiting for us the next day.

Tuesday, April the 23rd we spent in the city of Leuven. The orthopedic hospital of Pellenberg is completely different from the one in Gent. It is situated in a picturesque surrounding; it is specialized orthopedics hospital and once was tuberculosis sanatorium, just like the orthopedic hospital in my home city Ohrid. We were welcomed and honored with tour of the hospital by Prof. Dr. Johan Bellemans. Their scientific work, their publishing volume and their Clinical Motion Analysis Laboratory delighted us.

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Also we visited their highly functional outpatient clinic and the different departments. Then we entered the operating rooms. We were able to see all the operations that took place that day. I entered the foot operating room, where Prof. Dr. Giovanni Matricali performed an operation on hallux rigidus, triple arthrodesis and Akin and Chevron operation for hallux valgus. We also saw LCA reconstruction and reconstruction of the lateral ligament compartment of the knee with a biceps femoris tendon and also the second stage of revisional knee replacement. After the interesting day in the operating room we had even more interesting afternoon as we had the opportunity to attend the hospital's staff meeting. It's a regular weekly meeting where specific case reports are discussed. Remarkable open communication, allows every person regardless their educational level, from students to professors to give their opinion and ask any question.

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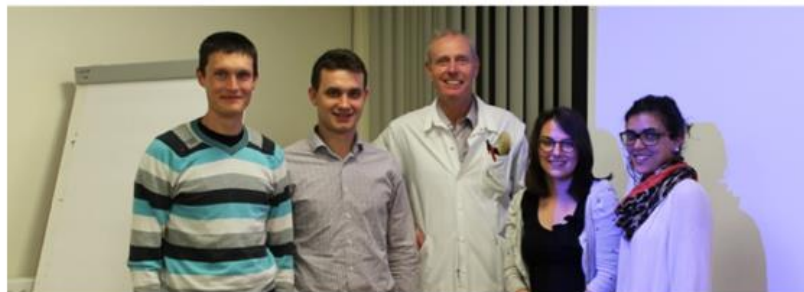
We didn't even notice that the evening came. In Belgium the day lasts long, it gets darker after 9:30 in springtime. Our hosts treated us with a dinner in an outstanding setting. "Faculty club", once representing a beguinage's infirmary, which dates back to the 13th century, today is a unique conference and banqueting center. The special atmosphere was enriched with sophisticated cuisine and once again lavish discourses. After the dinner we still had energy to be part of the zippy Leuven's nightlife.

Wednesday was reserved for the complete Brussels experience. Even though we spent two nights in Brussels we still hadn't seen it in daylight. We were lucky that day was sunny and warm. Raquel from Portugal, Benjamin from Slovenia, Manuel from Romania and I went to the university hospital in Brussels (Universitair Ziekenhuis Brussel). Raquel and I went to the operating room where upper limb operations took place. Prof. Dr. Nicole Pouliart performed arthroscopic calcification removal of shoulder, arthroscopic subacromial decompression and open reduction and internal fixation of clavicle fracture. Then we met Prof. Dr. Thierry Scheerlink who was waiting for us together with Benjamin and Manuel for lunch and an interesting session of presentations afterwards. We discussed the radiologic findings in hip arthroplasty, the distinction between normal and pathological signs, which was very useful for our everyday practice and also several specific cases of revision hip arthroplasty.

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When the session was over, Prof. Scheerlink took us to authentic walk in Brussels center, followed by the cherry on the top-dinner at the "Le Restaurant de l'Atomium". The Atomium is an iconic building in Brussels originally constructed for Expo '58, the 1958 Brussels World's Fair and is 102 m tall. We had dinner at the Panoramic restaurant, it was a special experience to have a dinner in one of the most representative monuments of Brussels, simultaneously having the best view of Brussels and the company of really big orthopedic names.

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All of that spiced up with wonderful food to which we got used to in Belgium. After this breathtaking experience, the bus was waiting for us in front of the Atomium and took us to our next stop - the city of Spa.

In Spa we had the opportunity to attend the joint congress of Orthopaedica Belgica (SORBCOT and BVOT) and the Belgian Society of Infectiology and Clinical Microbiology (SBIMKV/BVIKM) for Bone and Joint Infections, Biofilms and Bugs. This was an exceptional opportunity for us since infections are the greatest enemy of the orthopedic surgeons. During the two days we spent in Spa, we heard useful information about infections' diagnosis, management and treatment, as well as specific cases.

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The sessions were held in the Cultural Centre in Spa, in resplendent theatre. Once again we met our hosts from Gent, Leuven and Brussels, we heard and discussed about their experiences with the infections in orthopedics and traumatology. Perfect ending of a perfect week.

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On Thursday, we were honored to attend the official banquet in Abbaye de Stavelot founded in 651, a really special location. We had cocktail at the Spa-Francorchamps racetrack Museum surrounded by unique vehicles from the pioneers to the present day: Ferrari, March, Chevron, Porsche, Cooper. On Friday, the fellows, except for Anna who had to leave earlier, had an intimate dinner where we made a reminiscence of the week. The slight sadness that was flowing in the air because of the end of this wonderful experience drowned in the last glass of wine and the last plate of Belgian viands.

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I cordially thank to EFORT, Orthopaedica Belgica, MADOT and every individual involved in the organization of the EFORT Spring Travelling Fellowship 2013 in Belgium, for letting me have this overwhelming adventure.

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