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Introduction:

Just like a common arsonist would want to return to the site of the crime, so too would I come to the Emerald Isle for the EFORT Travelling Fellowship in Ireland in June 2018. Having done my entire six years of undergraduate medical training in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland from 2002-2008, I saw this as a fine opportunity to visit old pastures and reacquaint myself with the inner workings of the orthopaedic services in Ireland.

Detailed report:

Having applied and been selected to travel as the representative of the Norwegian Orthopaedic Association, I was pleased to be able to participate in this fellowship. I didn't know too much about what the programme would entail, nor were we given the details until the day before departure. Nevertheless we found that we had a pretty busy schedule all week and that our mentors, guides and coordinators looked after us every step of the way. In fact the only time I could roam free was when I arrived in Dublin, having landed at 11am on Monday and not due to check in until 7.30pm at the hotel. I had stumbled upon my colleague Hakan Iltis from Istanbul, Turkey at the airport and decided to bring him into the city centre for some proper kebabs at my favourite joint as a student: Zaytoon in Temple Bar. It was a bit strange being there completely sober and in the middle of the afternoon, but it was almost as good as I remember it. Graciously my Turkish friend agreed, but he strongly recommended I come to Istanbul for an even mightier kebab experience.

Later on we met our fellow EFORT travellers from all over Europe (11 total) back at the hotel and made our introductions. Since we were all a bit anxious we soon made our way to the onsite bar to have a few pints and an evening meal. We were joined by a handful of Irish trainee surgeons, our outstanding local coordinator Ms Emer Agnew as well as our main mentor Prof. Gary O'Toole. We were reminded there were only two strict rules during our fellowship: no jeans, and be on time for the bus!

The next morning we were all on the bus in our freshly pressed slacks at 8 AM. We were taken from Dublin, across the border to Northern Ireland and Belfast, to their largest elective orthopaedic site; Musgrave Park Hospital. There Mr. David Beverland and his colleagues kindly spent the rest of the day Tuesday and Wednesday until lunch giving us a variety of lectures on how they practice, train and do research in the North of Ireland, with an interesting perspective of a country bound by the UK system, but also with very strong ties to the rest of Ireland. The differences and similarities in orthopaedic practice in Europe were of course further dissected over more pints and good food in the evening.

After a healthy dose of orthopaedia and Irish style sandwiches we said farewell to Musgrave Park and were taken to the Titanic Museum for a spectacular tour highlighting the history of the shipbuilding industry in Belfast, and the eponymous vessel which is most famous for sinking on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic in 1912.

From Belfast we were brought back to Dublin and had another good evening meal and pints at the neighbourhood "it-place" the Gourmet Food Parlour. As a Scandinavian I was



delighted to find that gourmet in Ireland still doesn't mean lightly roasted organic moss with seasonal algae emulsion served on a lukewarm millstone - no, the aged angus ribeye steak was served rare with a rich peppercorn sauce and garlic potatoes, perfectly complementing the cold brew in our glass.

Thursday was spent in Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital, where Prof. John O'Byrne kindly greeted us and brought us into the operating theatres where we were split into pairs and were invited to observe the surgeons at work. We had ample opportunity to discuss details of various and sometimes differing practices between surgeons from our respective countries. After lunch we were given lectures by Prof. Gary O'Toole, who has the supernatural ability to make oncology interesting, I might even say exciting, by exploring the historical background and rationale for current practice in a masterly fashion. A definite highlight as far as the lectures went. Of course his endearing charisma couldn't quite top the upcoming event which was a tour of the Guinness (as in the porter stout) Storehouse in downtown Dublin - the highlight of which is pouring your own draught pint of the creamy black gold and enjoying it in the Gravity Bar with a group of Pan-european friends, high above the rooftops of historic Dublin, with a 360 degree view.

From there we were taken by coach to Johnnie Fox's; the highest pub in Ireland, and a bit of a tourist trap - but a pleasant one. Like a miniature theme park on Irish culture it is essentially a gastro-pub crammed with all kinds of memorabilia and serving wholesome Irish food with live folk music and a show with Irish dancers. Our Portuguese companion Andre was even asked up on stage to show off his hip range-of-motion in a crowd-pleasing sequence with Miss Molly Malone herself (picture Cristiano Ronaldo and Michael Flatleys lovechild swinging it on stage in front of a well served crowd of international tourists).

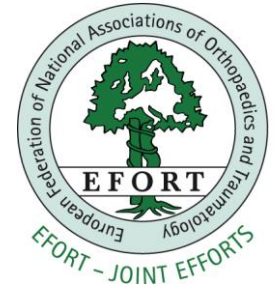
Friday Morning was thankfully a later start for most of us. The coach left at 10am for Portlaoise about one hour's drive from the capital. That's where the Irish Orthopaedic Association would hold their annual meeting and 30th anniversary dinner. The EFORT Travelling Fellows were all invited to join. Unfortunately I was unable to join my new friends to Portlaoise, since I had to get back to Trondheim to do security detail on my two young sons while their mother was on call all weekend. Reports from my friends who did make it to the meeting insinuate that it lived up to every expectation.

Conclusion:

It was a great experience to be able to come back to Ireland after nearly ten years on a travelling fellowship like this. My sense is that little has changed in Irish society in the time that has passed, and the high level of professionalism and academic rigour remains with our colleagues as I would expect. Interacting with orthopaedic surgeons from all over Europe in a small group gave us the chance to get to know each other, and really get an appreciation for how orthopaedic practice and education works throughout our relatively small, but enormously diverse continent.

I would like to express my great appreciation to EFORT and the Norwegian and Irish Orthopaedic Associations for sponsoring my fellowship. A special heartfelt thank you also goes out to the wonderful Emer Agnew who made sure we had everything we needed at all times, and our mentor, guide and awe inspiring lecturer Prof. Gary O'Toole for taking the time to give us a proper Irish experience. Sláinte!

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The EFORT crowd at Johnnie Fox's

