

BSDS TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP REPORT

**Dr Andrew Morris
Department of Dermatology,
University Hospital of Wales,
Heath Park,
Cardiff.
CF14 4XW**

**Superficial Anatomy and Cutaneous Surgery Course,
La Jolla Marriott Hotel,
La Jolla,
California.**

14th – 19th July 2003

Usually referred to as the “San Diego Course” this course is now into it’s 20th year and still regarded as the best of it’s type available. I attended this course within a few months of commencing my surgical fellowship in Cardiff. My main reasons for choosing the course were numerous, but in particular, I thought the combination of cadaver use for the demonstration of superficial anatomy and surgical techniques, together with the wide remit of subjects offered by the course would be especially useful.

The course is run at two different sites: the lectures are given in the ballroom at the Marriott hotel, whilst the anatomy demonstrations and dissection work are performed in the San Diego Medical School (a 10 minute bus ride away). Each evening concurrent sessions are run in the Marriott (usually 3), on a variety of different topics.

Broadly speaking the course can be divided into the following areas:

1 *Anatomy*

I thought the anatomical coverage was excellent. The lectures were given by Eric Breisch PhD, whose enthusiasm for the topic is almost infectious. The lectures were concise but comprehensive and well structured and were appropriate and relevant for the target audience. This was then reinforced by anatomy demonstrations in the lab which succeeded in imparting considerable knowledge, but was also a bit frightening when the reality that the facial nerve is actually a very small and easily missed structure becomes evident!

2 Basic Cutaneous Surgery

Given that this was an advanced course you could be forgiven for thinking that basic cutaneous surgery knowledge is taken for granted. This is essentially true, but some of the more useful topics were covered including: preparation of the surgical site, surgical instruments, local anaesthesia, incision planning, relaxed skin tension lines, and suturing. Although you definitely need both experience and knowledge of basic cutaneous surgery to get the most out of the course, these topics did provide a useful introduction to the more advanced topics covered in the course.

3 Advanced Cutaneous Surgery

This was the most eagerly anticipated part of the course for me and the course certainly delivered. Highlights included a great overview of techniques for complex closures, with comprehensive sessions on flaps and grafts followed by site specific talks for difficult closures around the nose, lip and ears. Armed with this knowledge you were then taken to the anatomy labs where these techniques were demonstrated by the great names in cutaneous surgery. To reinforce (or check) what you'd learnt there were small group interactive sessions (around 15 delegates and 3 tutors) using the tried and tested white flipchart and slide projector. I felt this combination of teaching methods worked very well together and the main difficulty was recording all the tips that were being offered.

4 Laser Surgery

This was well covered from the basics through to advanced techniques including laser demonstrations. Unsurprisingly, had a major cosmetic leaning to this topic but was still valuable.

5 Cosmetic Dermatology

Given the location of the course in Southern California I wasn't surprised to see a significant proportion of the programme devoted to aesthetics. Some of the talks were relevant to all cutaneous surgery practitioners eg. scar revision, although most of the topics were aimed at surgeons on the other side of the pond. However it was still very interesting to see what goes on and I still learnt something relevant to my practice from almost every talk.

Overall I thought this course was excellent it came with a big reputation and it didn't disappoint. Although it isn't cheap (it cost around £2200 in total) I felt it was good value for money. I would give the following advice for anyone thinking of attending the course:

- Book early (book online (www.cme.ucsd.edu))
- To really benefit you need to be comfortable with the basics of cutaneous surgery
- Make sure you register for the *advanced* interactive sessions
- Stay in the conference hotel. Although this works out more expensive it makes life much easier especially as evening sessions run until 9pm

I would like to thank the BSDS for awarding me a travelling fellowship, which facilitated my attendance at this course.

Dr Andrew Morris
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