

## **BSDS Travelling Fellowship Report**

**Dr Liz West**

Having already arranged to do a short unpaid fellowship in dermatological surgery in the new year of 2006, I was very pleased to receive a letter from the BSDS just before Christmas to say I would receive a Travelling Fellowship Award. Although still alarmed at the prospect of tight purse strings (eg no new shoes) for a whole three months, it did significantly help the essential side of finances. I arranged to do my fellowship in Cardiff, having seen Dr Morris and Dr Motley make presentations at various venues and knowing that Cardiff is a centre of excellence for Dermatological Surgery. The University Hospital of Wales has a large dermatology department, with five theatres. The department is very friendly and it was good to be hands on from the outset with supervision and support when needed. My learning curve was steep. In the early days I found myself relearning some basic surgical skills that I thought I had mastered years ago. I would sometimes wake up in a cold sweat with Dr Motley's voice saying, "But are your edges everted?!"

I have become confident and proficient with full thickness skin grafts, an essential skill. The area in which I have seen myself progress the most is with local skin flaps. Some flaps I assisted with in the first few weeks I felt were beyond my scope but towards the end of the fellowship was able to design and execute them independently.

The hardest aspect of skin surgery is designing your repair and as the weeks have gone by defects that would have previously been difficult I can now think of at least one or two sensible repair options. In addition I have spent two mornings every week participating in Mohs surgery, a technique I had not seen before, and which results in some large defects and complex closures.

Apart from surgery I have also learnt some new skills within a more cosmetic field including sclerotherapy and had the opportunity to use lasers. As well as enjoying the work side of things, I was lucky to find a small flat in Cardiff Bay which is a newly developed area with lots going on and numerous cafes and restaurants. We have made the most of weekends in Cardiff and the surrounding area, having been to the Brecon Beacons a few times to stretch our legs. In summary I have really enjoyed working in Cardiff, so much so that extended my fellowship by a further three months in order to really optimise my surgical skills!

**Dr Liz West SpR Liverpool**