

Reflections on the BSDS Surgical Refresher Course



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For Consultant Dermatologists like me who are interested in developing their surgical skills but don't quite have the appetite for Mohs surgery, cortical bone fenestration and paramedian forehead flaps, there are relatively few opportunities to step outside our surgical comfort zone with suitably experienced colleagues on hand to show you how to do things properly. I recall that past BSDS President Catriona Irvine ran a skin surgery update course for established consultants a few years ago- I think it was called 'Surgery for Seniors' - which was attended by some consultants who were at that time my trainers. I won't name any names but they were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to expand their repertoire of surgical skills. I was therefore delighted when the BSDS decided to run a similar course this year, organised by the indefatigable Wal Hussain and brilliantly assisted by Tamsin Goodwin-Connelly.

What better way to start a course than with a good dinner? Around half of the 40 delegates (both 'senior' and 'not quite so senior') arrived in Leeds on Friday evening, and enjoyed some tasty Thai food and good conversation at Chaophraya, prior to the 'course proper' on the Saturday, at the LIMIT suite at St James' Hospital.

Wal had assembled an excellent faculty: his Leeds colleagues Graeme Stables and Rajib Rahim, Tom Oliphant from Newcastle and Juber Hafiji, my fellow registrar-in-crime in Cambridge and now Consultant in Canterbury.

After some brief introductory lectures on basic procedures, suture techniques and perfecting the elliptical excision, we were let loose on slabs of pork belly (cutting and suturing them, that is) with the faculty on hand to demonstrate specific techniques. The course brought back happy memories of the surgical course I attended in Dundee as a registrar, only this time I was in a better position to benefit from the faculty's wisdom, as I was more confident of the basics and ready to try new tricks. My friend and fellow new-ish consultant Jon Goulding and I spent some time perfecting our running subcuticular suture technique. It was interesting to discover that various faculty members had slightly different approaches with this, showing that there really is more than one way to stitch a pig!

We paused for a lunch of banquet-like proportions and then launched headlong into further lectures on flaps and grafts. These were fascinating, and it was excellent to have a second workshop to try some of these out although I think I will leave the near-scalping of patients with huge rotation flaps to the faculty members! The day was rounded off with very helpful sessions on surgical pearls, complications and medicolegal aspects of skin surgery and a Q&A session.

Sincere thanks to the faculty and Tamsin for giving up half of their weekend to teach and inspire us. I have already started to put some of my newly-learnt skills into practice (but the helical rim advancement flap may have to wait for another day).

Following the success of this course, the BSDS are looking to run this course again, as well as running a similar course for Associate Specialists/Clinical Assistants in 2015. If you would like further information or to attend these courses please email info@bsds.org.uk to register your interest.



Dr Thomas Oliphant Demonstrating



Practical Workshop using Pig Skin



BSDS Surgical Refresher Faculty. (From left to right: Dr Rajib Rahim, Dr Thomas Oliphant, Dr Wal Hussain – Course Organiser, Dr Graeme Stables and Dr Juber Hafiji)



Surgical Lectures