

BSDS Travel Fellowship Report

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I spent 6 months in Brussels in 2 hospitals, Brugmann University Hospital and Saint-Pierre University Hospital, working in the department of Dermatology with Professor Bertrand Richert, who is a world expert in nail surgery and Professor Josette André, a world expert in nail histopathology.

I moved to a new country, speaking another language and with a different medical system to what I was used to. Although the beginning seemed very challenging, the period I spent in Brussels was truly amazing, for the following reasons.

My clinical activities were numerous:

- Nail clinics with exposure to a wide range of pathologies.
- Exposure to nail surgery as well as advanced facial surgery on a weekly basis.
- Weekly dressings clinics where post-operative patients would be seen. I was reviewing the patients with the help of the very experienced and supportive nursing staff and with senior support, if required. Those clinics were utterly educational as one could see the post-operative results, evaluate and improve the surgical techniques.
- Review of on-call patients and ward rounds with the local trainees, activities that prepared me to see my own general dermatology patients.
- Monthly educational dermatology meetings of the Brussels Society of Dermatology
- Monthly journal club early morning meetings.
- Monthly presentation and discussion of challenging patients.
- Finally, a presentation I gave in French language on lymphoma for the Lunchtime Dermatology Grand Round.

Although the clinics and surgical lists were very busy with a high turnover of patients, all seemed to run smoothly because of the very efficient organisation of the Dermatology Unit and the very experienced nursing staff.

It is not an absolute necessity to speak French in Brussels in order to survive. Many doctors speak English. However, if I didn't speak French I would not have learnt all I have learnt now, and I would have missed the invaluable, direct interaction with the patients.

Whilst in Brussels, I attended two important meetings: the Onychology course, (French session – www.onychologycourse.eu) and the biennial “Congrès de l'Association des Dermatologues Francophones”. It is a dermatology congress for all the French-speaking dermatologists, which this year, happened to be hosted by the dermatology team in Brussels. It was an amazing conference with a variety of topics discussed and a great opportunity to meet colleagues and learn how dermatology is practiced in France, Canada, Lebanon and the francophone countries in Africa.

Finally, Brussels is a great city, Belgium is a beautiful country and there were lots to see and do, when time allowed, in the hottest summer for the past 40 years!

Overall, my time spent there was busy and demanding, yet very memorable and precious.

I would like to thank my very supportive professors in Brussels for having me in their Department.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and thank the British Society for Dermatological Surgery for their financial support towards my fellowship.

Merci beaucoup !