

British Association of Dermatologists
Travel Bursary Report
Dowling Club Overseas Trip 2019 - Nepal
Bayanne Olabi

This year's Dowling Club Overseas Trip was held in Nepal, a country I had not visited before, and whose wonder and beauty did not cease to amaze. The organising Committee put together a fantastic jam-packed educational programme, allowing us to learn about clinical dermatology in a new setting, where prevalent conditions encountered vary significantly with those in our practice in the UK.

We were very fortunate to be able to attend the annual Conference of the Society of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists of Nepal (SODVELON) during the first two days of our trip. The programme consisted of a mix of Nepali and UK Dermatologists giving presentations on wide-ranging, interesting topics, with fascinating plenary lectures on leprosy, the skin and the microbiome, melanocyte transfer in vitiligo, psychodermatology and the skin and crime! I had the opportunity to deliver an oral presentation on the incidence and prevalence of dermatitis herpetiformis in South East Scotland over the last 3 decades, and appreciated the discussions afterward with the Nepali dermatologists on their own experience of dermatitis herpetiformis and its complications. Furthermore, there was a quiz session organised by the Nepali dermatologists for Residents and Registrars, where teams formed to answer questions in the competitive style of the popular television programme 'Jeopardy!'. This session also gave us the opportunity to get to know some of the Nepali trainees and it was interesting to learn about their experience of medical training.

The following day, we travelled to Anandaban Leprosy Hospital, which is located in a forest around 16km from Kathmandu city. "Anandaban" is Nepali for "forest of joy", and a holistic approach is adopted there to care for those affected by leprosy. We had tours of their outpatient clinics, physiotherapy department, inpatient wards, where some patients were recovering from reconstructive surgery, prosthesis unit and biomedical research laboratories, where cutting-edge research was being carried out, especially with the emergence of multidrug-resistant leprosy in recent years. I was overwhelmed by the dedication of the staff, as well as how welcoming and kind everyone at the centre were; the overall experience at Anandaban Hospital was one of the most memorable of my career to date.

We took flights to Pokhara the next day, where we visited Green Pastures hospital, which also serves patients affected by leprosy, as well as providing general medical and surgical treatment to the local population. The clinical meeting held there included talks about eczema, skin cancer and sun protection. Two local paediatric patients with possible Bloom syndrome or Rothmund-Thompson syndrome were also brought to the meeting, and our Paediatric Dermatologists, including Prof Moss, were able to review and provide advice.

Aside from the clinical sessions, this trip was a fantastic opportunity to dive into Nepali culture, enjoy the local delicacies and get to know my colleagues from other centres in the UK, as well as our Nepali colleagues. I am very grateful to Dr Julia Schofield and Dr Anusha Panthagani for organising such a wonderful and unforgettable trip.