

American Academy of Dermatology Registration Scholarship Report

Dr Jason Thomson

I am very grateful to the British Association of Dermatologists for awarding me an AAD Registration Scholarship which allowed me to go this year's conference that was held in San Diego, California from 16-20th February.

Prior to attending the conference in San Diego, I travelled to San Francisco where I had arranged an observership in the Department of Dermatology at University of California San Francisco (UCSF)- regarded as one of the best dermatology departments in the United States. The Department of Dermatology is based at the Mount Zion Campus on Divisadero Street in the heart of San Francisco. I spent time in the general dermatology clinic with Dr Kanade Shinkai as the attending consultant dermatologist. It was a fantastic experience seeing how Dermatology is practiced in such a famous institution. The clinics had an attending model whereby the residents and medical students clerked all the patients and presented them to the consultant who would then review all patients after quizzing the residents and getting them to formulate their management plans. The clinic environment felt really different to my own experiences of busy, over-stretched NHS services. The clinics were efficiently run and well resourced, with plentiful ancillary staff who ensured things ran smoothly. The department had a really friendly yet academic vibe. The residents were very well read and it was really interesting chatting to them about US dermatology training: much more stream-lined than our UK system but also very intense being packed into just 3 years. It was also very interesting to see how the need for medical insurance impacted upon all aspects of dermatology practice. The status of a patient's medical cover was as important a detail as their name or date of birth. There was a member of the finance team on hand to give patient's financial quotes for their care- particularly relevant for the 'high-deductible' patients who have to pay out of their own pocket, a pre-defined amount of their healthcare plan.

In addition to attending clinic, I also attended the UCSF Dermatology Grand Round which was a similar setup to our own grand rounds and St John's Society meetings. The guest speaker for the occasion was Dr Veronica Kinsler from Great Ormond Street Hospital and the cases presented were themed around giant congenital naevi and mosaics. Dr Kinsler gave an excellent keynote lecture to the faculty on mosaics and her work at Great Ormond Street.

I set off for San Diego on the Thursday before the conference. As an AAD International Scholarship recipient, myself and the other international scholarship winners were invited to the International Scholarship Reception and Dinner held in the Marriott Hotel. This was a great start to the conference experience, we were warmly welcomed by the AAD International committee and it was a great opportunity to meet other dermatology trainees from around the world as well as the AAD International committee; all whilst indulging in a really delicious buffet and a good amount of wine. The event was also attended by Dr Jean Bologna which infused an additional air of celebrity into the evening.

The conference officially started the next morning at the San Diego Convention Centre which is located next to San Diego Marina and the beautiful San Diego Bay. The Conference was absolutely massive with around 10,000 delegates and most of the biggest names in dermatology presenting. Each day kicked off bright and early at 7.30am and was jam-packed with excellent presentations in really well curated sessions. The sessions covered all aspects of dermatology from inflammatory, paediatrics, hair, surgery, dermoscopy to cosmetics. The sessions included symposia, workshops, discussions groups, plenaries and courses and

included “what’s new?” sessions for almost every dermatological condition, “hot topics” and “management pearls” for all the main diseases that were hugely insightful and presented really practical and helpful management advice for common dermatological conditions. Highlights for me included a fantastic overview of psoriasis and biologics from Mark Lebwohl, fascinating insights on pathogenesis of atopic dermatitis and therapeutics from Amy Paller and Emma Guttman and an excellent practical acne boot camp with Julie Harper.

Having such a massive venue with so many different rooms meant clashes were inevitable and there was often a strong sense of presentation FOMO (fear of missing out, for the non-millennial). Thankfully, the AAD app was really helpful for planning which sessions to go to and with most of the big-name speakers giving several presentations throughout the meeting, it meant that with a bit of forward planning I didn’t feel like I missed. I was given the opportunity to present my poster (on a rare case of AESOP syndrome) on the Saturday morning of the conference. Unsurprisingly, with so many big-name presentations going on in parallel with my 5 minute oral poster presentation, it was not a very well attended event.

Having the conference in beautiful San Diego meant that the social scene was excellent. The weather was fantastic most of the time we were there which allowed for lunches and sunset drinks outside and after the meeting I explored the stunning Californian coastline where I saw sealions, seals and even a whale.

I thoroughly enjoyed my Californian AAD 2018 experience and hope to go again to this amazing dermatology conference. I am very grateful for the opportunity given to me from the BAD and Dowling Club and would strongly recommend those who have not been to apply for this fantastic award.

