

## **Dowling Club Overseas Trip 2020 - Kerala Report**

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Since being redeployed from dermatology due to the covid 19 pandemic, the Dowling trip to Kerala in February seems a distant but very unforgettable memory. It was a trip I was able to take a great deal away from, not least as a great educational experience.

Our first educational meeting was the Malabar Bonhommie meeting. This was probably the largest event in terms of scale we attended and the speakers certainly provided me with a number of learning points. I found the talks on alopecia and genital dermatoses particularly useful, and since returning to the UK I've had a teaching session in Cardiff which happened to involve these two subjects, so I was able to use what I learnt as talking points! It was also great to present a case at this conference to my colleagues.

We then moved north to Kasaragod and thus attended the IADL meeting. This was my first real taste of Indian dermatology and it was wonderful to see a dedicated unit providing an important holistic and MDT-like service to patients with severe lymphoedema. For a lot of patients, the treatment they have there is life changing and is humbling to see. Some patients are completely destitute and come from far and wide for treatment. The discussions and bedside teaching on filariasis were fascinating – elephantitis and severe lymphoedema are uncommon in the UK so it was really useful to gain some expert insight into these conditions.

Our third educational day was based further south at the Amala hospital. The day involved a number of lectures and talks given by some of the local dermatologists as well as some of the Dowling cohort. The highlight of the day for me was seeing patients with cutaneous leprosy. I am yet to see a case of this in South Wales and it is a disease which I am not overly familiar with, despite its historical and cultural importance. These patients often have fairly innocuous looking firm papules or nodules – the key being there is also a history of associated paraesthesia – an important take home message for me. We also saw patients with cutaneous sporotrichosis and their lesions had developed and evolved in a classic 'sporotrichoid' distribution.

Having trained in east London, curry was a staple and I had always dismissed paneer out of hand. Keralean cuisine changed this for me – the food was incredible and not like anything I had tried before and the various paneer curries were mouthwatering. To add to this, the hotels we stayed in and the surrounding countryside were also beautiful. Two highlights for me were an evening bike ride around the local villages and the Allepy boat cruise.

Overall, the Kerala trip has many amazing memories for me. I met so many inspiring people who will remain friends for life and taught me many lessons. A trip I shall never forget.