

BAD/ DC Travel Fellowship Report

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European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) Fostering Resident Course on Contact Dermatitis, Sweden 27-29 May 2015



After a short flight to Copenhagen from London and a train ride across the famous Öresund bridge, I arrived in Malmö, which is Sweden's third largest city. It is also its most cosmopolitan one, with 150 nationalities under its belt. The city has a contemporary feel to it and is home to Scandinavia's tallest building, picturesque parks, edgy museums and exotic cuisine. It also houses one of the most advanced patch testing centres in Europe and it was a privilege to be able to gain insight into their work.

On our arrival, we received a warm welcome by our colourful course facilitators, Professor Magnus Bruze and Professor Marlène Isaksson, at the Skåne University Hospital. We then had an introductory session on the pathogenesis and clinical patterns of allergic contact dermatitis and the methodology of patch testing.

It was great to meet the other Dermatology trainees in attendance, who represented countries such as Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey and the UK, and it was interesting to explore the many differences and similarities in our clinical practices. At the end of the first day, we made our way back to our hotel just outside the city centre, where the course group was staying.

The second day of the course was the highlight for me as we spent the morning gaining clinical experience in the outpatient department. We were guided through the process of patch testing, from the selection of allergens through to preparation of patch tests, and finally reading and interpreting the results on live patients. We also had the chance to visit the analytical laboratory where patients' own products were processed for testing. I was amazed by how the technicians were able to test just about anything e.g. shin guards, helmets, other sports equipment. I was impressed by just how well-equipped and advanced their patch testing service was.

The rest of the course consisted of lectures on topics such as the individual contact allergens that are tested in the European baseline series with examples of the dermatitis they cause, and information on how contact allergy to them is managed in occupational or everyday settings.

I also had the opportunity to deliver an oral presentation on garlic allergy, reminding colleagues about the distinct pattern of allergic contact dermatitis that garlic can cause in those who grow, handle, prepare or cook food. I enjoyed listening to the other topics presented, such as allergy to a cough lozenge and a case of jellyfish dermatitis developing after swimming in the Mediterranean sea.

This inspirational course has greatly enhanced my knowledge of allergic contact dermatitis and patch testing, with lots of useful practical tips gained for improving my clinical practice. I have also met some wonderful people and gained some lifelong friends. I am extremely grateful for the BAD/DC fellowship award, which allowed me to take up this unique opportunity.