

American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting 2017

Dr Faisal Ali

In March 2017 I was granted the opportunity attend the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) in Orlando, Florida, supported by one of the annual BAD-AAD scholarships.

In the wake of the Presidential inauguration, prior to the main meeting, I took the opportunity to visit the clinics of Dr John Strasswimmer, a Mohs surgeon and dermatologist based in Delray Beach and an alumnus of St John's Institute of Dermatology, London. Delray Beach is a rejuvenated coastal town on the Atlantic coast of Florida, situated 10 miles from Mar-a-Lago, President Trump's 'Winter White House'.

Having recently undertaken an advanced dermatological surgery fellowship in St John's Institute of Dermatology, London, Dr Strasswimmer's set-up allowed me to compare and contrast his approach to dermatological surgery as a single-handed Mohs surgeon. He serves a comparatively older population with a high cumulative burden of ultraviolet light exposure, many of whom take concurrent anticoagulants and have multiple medical co-morbidities. His striking efficiency was impressed on me, in particular single-handedly undertaking eight Mohs surgery cases each day, of varying complexity with in house repair, completing all by 2.00pm with time for an afternoon clinic of cutaneous surgery consultations. Many of the skills learned I hope to eventually recapitulate in my practice in the UK, including the use of barbed sutures in photodamaged skin, minimal undermining in anticoagulated patients and maximising the effective deployment of the rest of the team.

Particularly inspiring was Dr Strasswimmer's capacity to balance the demands of a heavy workload of Mohs surgery with concurrent consultations, ongoing research into Hedgehog pathway inhibitors for locally advanced basal cell carcinomas as well as regular charitable work for the uninsured, both in the USA and Grenada, the latter of which I hope to support in future.

I am particularly grateful for Dr Strasswimmer's excellent and enthusiastic teaching and for Dr and Mrs Strasswimmer's warm hospitality.

Working in Delray Beach in the dying days of Obamacare and as the Affordable Care Act was being repealed allowed me to appreciate working in a national health service in which (at present) necessary treatments for patients with severe skin disease are generally not precluded on financial grounds, whether that is Mohs surgery for recurrent skin tumours to systemic and biologic agents for severe psoriasis.

We then drove to the tourist epicentre of Orlando Florida for the convention beginning on 2nd March. The scholarship recipients were invited to the international scholarship recipients' dinner, where we were equipped with our certificates and AAD baseball caps and welcomed by the AAD leadership. The dinner was thoroughly enjoyable and an unrivalled opportunity to meet other young dermatologists from around the globe, from Argentina to Australia.

The sessions started in earnest on the Friday morning with 7.30am start times the norm. All lectures I attended were delivered by world experts in their respective fields and offered a précis of the entirety of a subspecialty, interspersed with a surfeit of diagnostic and therapeutic pearls that can easily be incorporated into clinical practice. Every clinical, pathological and managerial aspect of dermatology seemed to be covered. The main complaint of delegates was that more often than not there were several sessions running concurrently all of which we wanted to attend. Of the procedural dermatology sessions I attended, it was particularly instructive to see the excellent session by Dr Wal Hussain (Leeds) alongside the renowned US Cook brothers, covering techniques to improve flap and graft success.

The exclusively consultant-delivered nature of teaching, size of the convention (11000 delegates), significant proportion of the programme devoted to cosmetic dermatology and practice management and food portion sizes distinguished the AAD from its non-US counterparts.

I am very grateful for the support of the BAD in attending this year's AAD Annual Meeting and would strongly encourage UK dermatologists (particularly trainees) to apply for the the BAD-AAD scholarship and consider combining their trip with a visit to a local American hospital or laboratory from whom they will certainly learn and with whom they may collaborate.

I myself look forward to attending the AAD annual meeting and working with Dr Strasswimmer's team in future.