

BAD/DC Travel Fellowship - Winter 2019
World Congress of Dermatology, Milan 2019

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The World Congress of Dermatology 2019 was hosted in fabulous Milan. The epicentre of fashion, opera and for a week in June 2019 it became the epicentre of Dermatology!

I am extremely grateful to the British Association of Dermatologists for awarding me a travel fellowship and giving me the opportunity to attend the World Congress for the first but not last time in my career. As Professor Lui said in his closing statement, "The World Congress of Dermatology is something people remember for the rest of their lives," and I could not agree more with this sentiment. It was inspiring on a clinical, academic and cultural level. I met new colleagues from different parts of the world and reconnected with old friends.

There were over 16,000 delegates attending from every part of the world. There was an exceptional program with numerous talks by world experts, and I often felt torn with which talks to attend in view of this. Although initially it felt overwhelming, it was absolutely inspiring to meet colleagues with the same interests and passions in dermatology and to truly learn from each other, bouncing new ideas and discussing future collaborations. We face similar challenges but often with a different armamentarium and approach; appreciating this can help us gain new perspective.

I found the plenary sessions organised by Professor Griffiths absolutely inspirational. It was refreshing to see non-dermatology based talks, which were thought-provoking. As a massive space fan, Professor Boller's astrophysics talk on the 'Beginning and end of the universe' was magical and simultaneously humbling, as he transcended us through the galaxies. Dr Redmond, Director of Student Experience and Enhancement at the University of Liverpool, presented the different generations and the task of these three different generations with diverse mentality, approach and 'generational language' having to work together in one workforce. In his 'spot-on' descriptions I identified my parents as the baby boomers, practically all my consultants fit the Generation X, and I realised I am truly a Generation Y. As he said, the generation that is always asking 'why?'. But I have embraced his solution of 'co-mentoring', acknowledging our differences and learning from each other's strengths.

It is exciting to see the research taking place on a global scale in different aspects of dermatology and the landscape of our future treatments looks even more promising. Professor King, from Yale presented his work on Jak-inhibitors in alopecia areata. Dr Harris gave a fascinating talk on his vitiligo research findings suggestive of new treatment avenues. But some of the talks led to reflecting on how far we have come already: Professor Barker's plenary session on the use of biologics for psoriasis and Dr Dlova's touching talk on HIV dermatoses and the use of anti-retroviral treatment which have undoubtedly transformed people's lives.

I had the opportunity to present our project during the 'Pigmentation and Laser' session on the use of lasers in connective tissue disorders on behalf of Dr Madan and Dr Ferguson. I felt immense pride to see a great representation of British Dermatologists including several of my consultants as invited speakers, and several UK-based registrars demonstrating that in the UK we are still pushing boundaries and have a strong presence on an international platform.

Finally, I share two key messages that I took home with me regarding my future approach. Dr Anderson, a pioneer in lasers, eloquently conveyed the importance to keep an open mind, embracing new technologies, artificial intelligence and to not fear new innovative approaches to our care. And Dr Gontijo concurred this by urging us to, "to be curious, change the "status quo" but never forget the 'physician's touch.' He closed with a poignant quote by Jung "know all theories, master all the techniques, but as you touch a human soul, be just another human soul."



(Above) Photo credits to Dr T. Clayton. Photo of the majestic Duomo.



(Left) Professor Griffiths and I at the closing ceremony.