American Tour 2015

Academic Exchange Programme

Memorable experience during exchange programme in the US

The EAU/AUA Academic Exchange Programme is one of the many prominent activities provided by the European Association of Urology. We felt honoured and privileged when awarded with this scholarship that incorporates a tour among American institutions accompanied with participation in the 2015 AUA annual meeting.

Three academic centres (namely, UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine as well as Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem) had been selected as hosts offering an intensive scientific and cultural programme.

The first centre we visited was the UT Southwestern in Dallas, Texas, where we experienced a very warm welcome by chairman Prof. Claus Roehrborn and his faculty. After a long flight from Europe, the hospitality of Texas was remarkable! It started with a visit at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Centre followed by a reception held by one of the faculty members.

During our stay at UT Southwestern each day was filled with webcasts of live surgeries, tours in the campus, scientific presentations as well as cultural experiences based on a hectic, but well-balanced schedule.

From a conference room we could observe live transmissions of surgeries (robotic assisted laparoscopic radical prostatectomy on a high-risk patient, partial nephrectomy of a centrally located tumour, PCNL of a complete staghorn calculi and transurethral resection of the bladder). Simultaneously, we discussed the cases and procedures with the surgeons and discovered similarities as well as differences in urological care between the US and our institutions.

Just a few months ago the department of urology moved to the brand new Clements Hospital, thanks to generous donations, as it is often the case in the US. Since medical doctors were involved in the planning one of the major advantages is a well-organized layout and system of pre-op, operation and recovery rooms equipped with the latest technology dedicated to high-class urological care. More surprisingly, we had an art tour in the hospital as a certain amount of the budget had been dedicated to the hospital’s art projects.

Additionally, several scientific presentations were scheduled during our visit in Dallas with faculty covering different urological topics (e.g. on advances in targeting the androgen receptor, sexual development and vaginoplasty repair, study on the search for septic shock predicting factors in obstructive pyelonephritis or MRI-TRUS fusion biopsy). As part of these lectures we also had the opportunity to present our research and introduce our institutions.

We had also the pleasure to be introduced to the “Old Wild West” with a guided tour through the Amon Carter Museum displaying one of the best selections of art paintings depicting the life during the first settlements. A visit to the Winspear Opera House where we enjoyed the musical “Newsies” completed our stay. In general, the faculty at UT Southwestern showed great efforts to make it a memorable and rewarding visit for us.

After this short, but intense stay in Dallas, we moved on to Florida to visit the Urology Division of University of Miami hospital led by Prof. Gopal Badlani and his team. In the institution a strong emphasis lays on robotic surgery with six robotic systems currently in use – mainly for prostate and renal cancers. After a lecture on the current role of robotic radical cystectomy we could observe challenging cases of partial nephrectomies and prostatectomies during the next two days as well as discuss differences in treatment concepts when compared to our institutions. Although the major management tenets do not differ much and share similar guidelines, we still could notice small differences regarding surgical approaches (more robotic, less laparoscopic or open) and general management of patients (length of hospitalisation, medical treatment or application of imaging studies). We also observed their system of prostate fusion biopsy and were introduced to a prospectively maintained data management system that allows evaluation of this new technique and correlation with further patient management. After these exciting and intense days we were able to relax during our free week-end in Miami experiencing the Miami and Cuban way of life and the beauty of South Beach.

The next destination was the Department of Urology at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Here, again, we received a warm welcome by Prof. Gopal Badlani, the current Secretary of the AUA. He invited us to a welcome reception and dinner at his house where we could meet the faculty of the Department of Urology. The next two days were again filled with interesting cases of surgery that covered urotheliascopic, PCNL as well as Mini-PELSE for reninomas, robotic radical prostatectomy, partial nephrectomy and cryotherapy for prostate cancer. During general rounds we were asked to present our current main research focus. Francois Audenet held a talk on Lynch-syndrome and its association to upper tract urothelial cell carcinoma, Tobias Maurer presented data on 68Ga-PSMA-PET for diagnosis and staging of prostate cancer followed by Jakub Dobruch who spoke on the importance of adequate pelvic lymph node dissection in prostate cancer. At the end of our stay we got a chance to visit the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine – a laboratory devoted to develop biological substitutes for human tissues. The long and difficult way of implementation basic animal experiments – achievements into daily, clinical practice was introduced during the tour along the lab.

At the end, we travelled on to the AUA Annual Meeting in New Orleans where we attended high-class scientific sessions, the AUA President’s Reception as well as enjoy the amazing city of New Orleans before we left again for Europe. All together, the EAU/AUA Academic Exchange Programme 2015 has significantly broadened our perception and understanding of current practice in urology in the US – experiences that none of us wants to miss anymore! Thus, we would like to encourage urologists from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean to participate in future exchange programmes.