



Our European sojourn: Lively exchange and professional collaboration



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scalpels and blades (nothing like "cold British steel" to get a group of surgeons fired up at the beginning of the day). Swan-Morton's success is attributed to its unique culture and the philosophy of its founders where all the employees are shareholders, and its success has symbolized the Sheffield's (and indeed the UK's) transformation as an economic and industrial power. As surgeons we truly enjoyed learning about every step of the process that involves manufacturing 70 different high quality, precise, and reliable blades that we hold in our hands every day. Later that day we were introduced to the Department of Urology at Royal Hallamshire Hospital by Dr. Richard Inman. Dr. Inman provided a thorough overview of the clinical, research, and educational components of the Urology Department. This was followed by an excellent lecture on evidence-based approach to urethral reconstructive surgery. While there, we discussed some of their cutting-edge research in tissue engineering and afferent signalling pathways in lower urinary tract and their application in functional urology. Prof. Chapple provided a historical overview of the EAU and its activities, growth and outreach, and Prof. Catto discussed his vision for European Urology and the publication of European Urology Focus. We also observed oncologic (radical cystectomy and nephrectomy) and functional (vesicovaginal fistula repair and urethroplasty) procedures performed routinely at the Royal Hallamshire. It was a pleasure observing and learning from our master-surgeon colleagues in the UK, and their surgical philosophy with its emphasis on evidence-based clinical care and tradition, which gave us a foretaste of the further wonderful experiences to follow.

We would like to thank the AUA and the EAU for the opportunity to participate in the EAU-AUA 2016 International Academic Exchange Programme. This programme truly represents a once in a lifetime experience, and has been one of the most rewarding professional experiences of our careers.

As scholars we come from a variety of different personal and professional backgrounds in the United States, but share a common dedication for research, scholarship, innovation, and teaching. This programme helped to foster these passions through a lively exchange of ideas, professional collaboration, and most importantly, friendship.

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals, Sheffield, UK
We are grateful to Sheffield Teaching Hospitals in Sheffield, UK under the leadership of Professors Chris Chapple and James Catto for their warm hospitality and outstanding programme. Our experience began on Saturday, 27 February, with an excursion through the beautiful countryside and moors of South Yorkshire with Prof. Chapple. On Sunday, we visited Hardwick Hall which served as a microcosm and encapsulates English history from the Elizabethan era to the 1950's. We strolled through the ruins, the meticulously landscaped English Gardens, and enjoyed a tour of the preserved country house.

On February 29, our academic activities kicked off in earnest with a tour of Swann-Morton, one of the world's pre-eminent manufacturers of surgical

UZ Leuven Gathuisberg Hospital, Leuven, Belgium
We then travelled to Leuven, Belgium, where we stayed in the Begijnhof Hotel, which is part of the enchanting Grand Béguinage of Leuven, a UNESCO world heritage site dating to the 13th century. We were welcomed to the department by Professor Dirk De Ridder and his team during their morning report. Here we observed the residents transitioning care to the on-call staff. The UZ Department of Urology is a busy service with many complex patients; however, we were all very impressed with their ease of doing the handoff so effectively and proficiently in English. Later, Prof. De Ridder gave an overview of the department and of the Belgian healthcare system. Their comprehensive and integrated electronic health record, which was developed 'ground-up' and with extensive physician input, was not only state-of-the-art, but combined ease of use and was portable, and facilitated efficient communication between caregivers across the health system. It also included cost information at the point of care, which was remarkable. The teamwork and collaboration amongst medical students, residents, and faculty of the Urology team at UZ Leuven clearly stood out. We enjoyed our oncological and functional operative observations with Professors De Ridder, Steven Joniau, and Frank Van Der Aa—indeed, we marvelled at the combined force of surgical leadership and excellence and systems integration in the operating room. We were also honoured to share our own research endeavours in the special setting of the Faculty Club at the Béguinage and toured the



The display of work by Kandinsky, Marc, Münter, and many others at Lenbachhaus all fit together to give the visitor an understanding of how the Blue Rider school of art developed

Department's research facilities and heard about the ground-breaking research in developing animal models for studying underactive bladder.

Our time in Belgium ended with a sampling of the rich culinary (world famous chocolates and regional beers) and cultural delights of Belgium. Prof. De Ridder and his faculty and house staff's hospitality was wonderful and our hosts ensured that we had had a comprehensive understanding of the scope and breadth of urological practice and academics at UZ Leuven, and ensured that we experienced the culture and history with wonderful walking tours of Leuven and Brussels.

University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy
We arrived in Milan under rainy and cloudy skies, but the warm reception by Professor Montorsi and his Department at the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele Hospital more than made up for the chilly conditions. The accomplished surgical and research team led by Professors Montorsi, Briganti, Salonia, Suardi and colleagues presented some of most thought-provoking research on prostate and kidney cancer that we heard during our visit. We were impressed by the world-class investigational infrastructure and the interactive research presentations and operating room observations, which enhanced our shared understanding and will certainly foster future collaborations. The echoes of history were constantly present during our walking tours where we viewed the impressive Duomo, the Sforza Palace, and the historic Teatro alla Scala, as well as the Futurist architecture. Our hosts went above and beyond to ensure that we had a special experience by visiting one of the world's most famous and treasured paintings: The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci. Gazing at this late 15th century fresco painted in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and listening to our guide detailing the expressions and emotions of each of the characters was an unforgettable and awe-inspiring experience. The trip ended with the delightful, avant-garde and regional cuisines and wine pairings and brilliant conversations that we shared with our Italian friends.

LMU-Klinikum der Universität München, Munich, DE
The final stop in our itinerary was with Professor Stief and the Department of Urology at LMU in Munich. We were briefly immersed in the clinical life and activity of the Department. Our hosts, Professors Stief, Gratzke, Staehler, and their team graciously arranged

for us to scrub into many of their surgical procedures. While there we enjoyed the culture of innovation and high-volume surgical prowess which pervaded the Department and its operating rooms. Our presentations generated spirited discussions which will hopefully lead to further collaborations. Our experience was rounded up by an unforgettable walking tour of the heart of Munich and its historical medieval origins, Baroque splendour, and modern synthesis. We were graciously welcomed to Professor



A highlight of the EAU Congress was to receive our plaques from Prof. Chapple at the EAU Friendship dinner

Stief's home for a wonderful lunch followed by a special tour of the Lenbachhaus Museum, whose collection highlighted Munich's role as a focal point in the birth of modern art and the "Blaue Reiter" movement.

Annual EAU Meeting, Munich, Germany
Attending the 31st Annual European Association of Urology (EAU) Congress was the highlight of our trip. We were impressed with the programme's emphasis on innovation and world-wide dissemination of knowledge to improve patient care. The sessions and ensuing discussions were wonderful forums to learn and presented myriad opportunities to question and to collaborate. Our nearly three-week adventure as EAU-AUA International Academic Exchange Scholars culminated with the Friendship Dinner at the Residenz Munich. It gave us a chance to reconnect with the friends and colleagues we had just made and to make plans to welcome them in America at the next AUA congress.

We were shaken by the recent terrorist attacks in Brussels and we stand in solidarity with our friends and colleagues in Belgium. We left with the deepest gratitude and appreciation to the institutions we visited, the friends we have made, the future collaborations we hope to build upon, and the AUA and EAU for supporting such a wonderful and worthwhile endeavour.



Tour of Harwick Hall in South Yorkshire with Prof Chapple and scholars