

EUROPEAN ARTHROSCOPY FELLOWSHIP (ARTHREX STIPEND FOR ESSKA)

Reported by Dr. Octav Russu

From my personal point of view, the European Arthroscopy Fellowship was a fascinating experience, a unique occasion to meet very special people, to see exceptional places and to gain access to some of the European centres that are considered leaders in arthroscopic surgery. From all the colleagues met during the fellowship, a special place will always be occupied by the other participant fellows: Michael Hirschmann (AGA), a native of Frankfurt/ Main, in present Head of Research, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology in Kantonsspital Bruderholz, Switzerland; Alexandre Journe (SFA), a graduate of Dijon, intern in many Parisian hospitals, and currently an intern at Hopital Pitie-Salpetriere; Mario Vale (SAPO), born in Lisbon, a final year resident at Centro Hospitalar Lisboa Norte, and physician of the Portuguese Federation of Judo; Celeste Scotti, (SIGASCOT) from Milan, currently a PhD Candidate in Bioengineering, Tissue Engineering Laboratory at Basel University and Visiting Physician at the Department of Trauma Surgery in Basel University Hospital.

The Fellowship started on 22 September 2011 – a very successful start for all of us fellows – with participating at the 28th Congress of AGA - German-speaking Arthroscopy Association – in Regensburg. AGA brings together about 3000 members, thus being the second largest society of its kind, after its American counterpart. Members of AGA are mostly arthroscopists from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but also Turkey and Romania. We were very warmly welcomed by Mrs Eva Maria Pinz, the Secretary of AGA and we had the opportunity to see the Congress opening, the AGA President's Speech, and that of the President of the University of Regensburg. As the sessions started, we (the fellows) started to get to know each other better. The biggest attractions of the Congress were the live surgeries, with particular emphasis on tips and tricks, and the meetings in which – as we asked for – everyone spoke in English, for better communication. We also got to meet two of our future hosts, S. Zaffagnini and Ph. Hardy. Another high point of the Congress was the Bavarian evening (while we were in Munich, Oktoberfest was celebrated) and the festive dinner on the last day of the Congress – we had the honour to participate in these events, together with the majority of AGA leaders.



Germany, from left to right: Prof. Dr. Peter Angele, Dr. Mario Vale, Dr. Michael Hirschmann, Dr. Jurgen Eichhorn, Dr. Octav Russu, Dr. Celeste Scotti

The next day – after a tour of Regensburg Hospital and a short trip with a sled on rails (called Sommer-rodeln) – we were led by Prof. Peter Angele and his son to Bad Griesbach, in a very warm atmosphere. We had lunch with our other host, Dr. Jürgen Eichhorn, and his guests (Tom Rosenberg, Tim Hewitt), after which we got to the St. Wolfgang hotel/clinic, an exclusive location that was going to be our home for the next few days.

The next day began with Dr. Eichhorn's surgery schedule, specially tailored for the fellows: ACL reconstructions, especially double-bundle, and also computer-assisted and single-bundle ACL reconstructions. I was impressed by the flawless technique (only semitendinosus graft, harvested and prepared with a millimetric precision, perfect positioning of the tunnels, button fixation), the speed of execution, the highly experienced team; what followed was a computer-assisted high tibial osteotomy and a cartilage transplant, performed by Prof. Angele. The day after, we had the pleasure to meet Dr. Thomas Buchhorn, and to assist to his very interesting surgical program of the day (open and arthroscopic surgery of the ankle and foot). The German part of the Fellowship ended with our arrival at the Oktoberfest.

Our next destination was Toulouse ("La Ville Rose"), where we were welcomed by Dr. Jean-Francois Potel, our host, and driven to the hotel after a lovely dinner in the famous "Piata Capitale", during which we met other members of the orthopaedic group here. Thursday morning we had a busy surgical schedule, in a modern clinic, with 6 rooms for orthopaedic surgery: anterior and posterior cruciate ligament surgery, knee arthroplasties, tibial osteotomies; in the evening we had a scientific session at a pleasant location, with presentations made mainly by the fellows. On Friday we had an interesting surgery schedule again, with shoulder, ankle and hip arthroscopies, and on Saturday morning we visited the Airbus factory. Sunday's highlight was the rugby match between the teams of Toulouse and Clermont, a first of its kind for most fellows.

Next morning we went to Paris, the final destination of the French part of the Fellowship, and also Alexandre's home. After a little tour with "bateau-mouche" and a coffee latte in Champs Elysees, we had a cheese and wine tasting at Alexandre's home (with this occasion we also celebrated Michael's birthday). Monday at Hopital Ambroise Pare, after the report led by Professor Ph. Hardy, we had a very interesting surgery schedule: arthroscopic Bankart, a hip arthroplasty, and a single-bundle ACL reconstruction and an ankle arthroscopy in a second room, dedicated to arthroscopy; we also attended a hallux valgus surgery, performed in the foot surgery room by Dr. Bauer. In the afternoon we had a scientific program, with the fellow's and our Parisian host's presentations. Dinner in a very pleasant surroundings, with "foie gras", red wine and gifts for us fellows, ended an excellent day. After the next day's surgical program (inside-out ACL reconstruction) we got to the airport - and late at night we arrived in Bologna, Italy's first city of the Fellowship tour; where we were accommodated in a very cosy hotel in the historic centre of Bologna.



France, second from left, Prof. Dr. Philippe Hardy, the fellows, some French students and the fourth from right, our french fellow, Dr. Alexandre Journe

Early Wednesday morning, after a warm welcome by Professor Stefano Zaffagnini, the surgery schedule was the following: arthroscopic meniscal transplant (with allograft), an ACL reconstruction ("over the top"), with pre-, intra- and post-operative evaluation of laxity with the Chira system – a system designed by them. I noted that the computer programmers were in the operating room. A knee revision arthroplasty followed, with navigation. I appreciated the time allocated for discussion about the cases seen, and on other cases. What followed was an impressive moment – a visit to Professor Putti's library, with collections of all major orthopaedic journals, old photographs of the institute, etc. the dinner on a terrace in the historical centre of Bologna closed an exciting day. The next morning we had a session of scientific communications, made by the fellows and our hosts, during which we met Prof. M. Marcacci; after that we visited the research facilities of Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli, which impressed me with their impeccable organization, approach, quality and volume of research done. We had lunch in the centre of Bologna and then took the train to Verona.

The Veronese stage of the Fellowship began with a dinner "arrosti is bolliti", during which we were introduced to our host in Verona, Dr. Claudio Zorzi (the President of SIGASCOT), and the rest of his team. Friday we attended a series of surgeries at Ospedale "Sacro Cuore", including a posterior cruciate ligament reconstruction, a few rotator cuff sutures and a hip resurfacing; the day continued with a series of scientific presentations made by the fellows, dinner at a central restaurant, near The Verona-Colloseum. Saturday morning, scheduled surgeries included a meniscal transplant and a few shoulder arthroscopies (rotator cuff surgery). I noted a well organised team, a warm atmosphere and, in terms of the Fellows, sufficient time allocated for discussions related to indications, seen cases, etc. We also visited the centre of Verona and the famous house of Juliette.

On Sunday morning we landed in Lisbon, Mario's city, where, after being accommodated in a business hotel (Olissipo Oriente) we had dinner in a seafood restaurant in an area near the Universal Exhibition. Next morning we were very warmly greeted at Hospital CUF Descobertas by Dr. Ricardo Varotojo, our host. After attending a series of surgeries – ACL reconstructions (anatomic single bundle, additional medial approach, femoral button fixation and bio-absorbable screw and clamp fixation on the tibial side), we had lunch at a seafood restaurant and took a dip

in the ocean, on a dream beach, all courtesy of Dr. Pedro Pessoa's son. The dinner that followed – at the home of Dr. Pedro Pessoa (the President of SPAT), was worthy of a reception, and we met Dr. Jorge Mineiro and his wife; our evenings conversations crowned a wonderful day. Next morning - surgery: knee arthroplasties, meniscectomies, ACL reconstructions and some shoulder arthroscopies. Following surgery we had a real conference organized by our hosts, in which both the Fellow's and our Portuguese colleagues made their presentations. The evening ended with dinner in a local restaurant.

The next morning brought a flight to Valencia with a mini-plane (18 seats), the last destination of the Fellowship. The welcome was exceptional, and so well organised that an hour after landing and accommodation in a business hotel in the centre of Valencia, we were picnicking at Dr. Forriol's house, in swimsuits, cooking paella and cooling in the pool. The next day we were again in the operating room, this time in Gastaldi Clinic, Hospital 9 de Octubre, clinic founded by the father of Dr. Enrique Gastaldi, our Spanish host. Together with our Spanish colleagues we attended a series of interventions: a wrist arthroscopy, an MPFL reconstruction, an ACL reconstruction, a total knee arthroplasty and a hip arthroscopy. After a fabulous dinner in the centre of Valencia, we headed to our hotel rooms. On our last day we attended a knee arthroplasty with a "custom-made" endoprosthesis, an ACL reconstruction and an arthroscopic ankle arthrodesis with Dr. Gastaldi. We had lunch at Albufera, after a tour on the lake. We were all overcome with melancholy, knowing that I was the last day of fellowship.

Next morning – early in the morning – I returned home, after several hours of flight.

The days spent in the fellowship will remain for a long time memorable days, the trip of my life so far. I met great people, whom I have to thank, first Mrs Brigitte Dolenc from ESSKA, and then all the other fellows, all the hosts from the visited centres, Otto Bock, Mrs Eva Maria Pinz and Mrs Corine Bensimon. Of course I'd also like to thank Prof. Dr. Nagy Örs – my boss – and all of my colleagues at the clinic: without their efforts this fellowship would not have been possible.

A final tip: apply to fellowships!