

My name is Carlota Fernandez Prendes and I am about to finish my five-year vascular surgery training program in the Hospital Universitario Central de Asturias, in Oviedo, Spain.

One of my worries throughout my residency period was that with the advance of endovascular treatment for all types of pathologies and especially in aortic disease, I would finish my training with a deficit of experience in advanced open surgery. On the other hand, I also developed a special interest in complex aortic pathology and was very keen in joining a high volume aortic center that not only offered endovascular solutions, but was also a center of excellence for open surgical treatment of TAAA. With this in mind, I performed an extensive search of possible centers that still performed open TAAA repair and maintained a high percentage of open surgery.

Finally, I had the opportunity of joining the Ospedale San Raffaele (Vita Salute University-Milano) team for two months during March and April of 2018, with the economical support of the ESVS Educational Travel Grant. Although they need no introduction, they are an extremely-high volume center in Europe, with a world- known reputation, lead by Chief Profesor Roberto Chiesa and secondly Profesor Germano Melissano. They are performing over 100 TAAA and 500 AAA per year, are included in multiple on-going clinical trials, and have formed an integral part of the development of recent guidelines for various types of aortic pathology.

During my two month clinical fellowship, I was integrated into their daily schedule and was offered the possibility of scrubbing-in in about 80-90% of the cases. I had the opportunity of assisting in over 15 TAAA open repairs, 30 AAA open reconstructions, 5 TEVAR and 15 EVAR, and in over 40 CEA. I also had the chance to be present in 2 FEVAR, one subacute type B dissection managed with the new STABILISE approach, two aorto-enteric fistulae, one 9 cm hepatic artery aneurysm as well as a couple of splenic aneurysms, a few carotid body tumor, one open reconstruction of an aortic coarctation and one open reconstruction of a ruptured vena cava.

From an academic perspective, during my two-month stay, I was invited to join them in two different meetings (a thoracic aortic oriented work-shop and a Brazilian-Italian symposium), and was also invited to attend the Milano Aortic How To Do It meeting in December 2018, which was very interesting and offered a high number of “hands-on” workshops, covering both endovascular and open stations, that were very useful to improve my skillset.

Overall, I had an amazing experience both professionally and personally with their team and in the beautiful city of Milano. I had the opportunity to witness first-hand different types of interventions that I had only read in books and that are currently only being offered in a number of very select centers around the world.

I would like to give a sincere thank you to the Ospedale San Raffaele team for receiving me and to the ESVS for making this possible.

If you are considering visiting the Ospedale San Raffaele and want further information from a trainee's perspective, please do not hesitate to contact me at +34625998778 or via email at carlota.f.prendes@gmail.com.

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