Dr Rosalba Paone

Oulu University Hospital

Finland

rosalba.paone@yahoo.it

EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL GRANT REPORT

**Brighton Vascular Access Fellowship**

Vascular unit

Royal Sussex County Hospital

England

January-February 2020

**The Fellowship**

The Vascular Unit at Brighton Royal Sussex County Hospital offers a novel, one-to-one tuition in the provision of the full range of renal access procedures, clinically, planning and surveillance imaging (duplex), surgical and interventional radiology over a sixteen-day programme, spread over an eight-week duration. The fellowship is targeting higher surgical trainees as well as newly appointed consultant surgeons with a desired interest.

**The Department**

The Unit possesses 450 patients on dialysis (catchment area 1.2million) and undertakes 300 haemodialysis procedures per annum with two operative sessions per week, delivering the full range of procedures, open and interventional with two clinics per week.

Mr Karim El Sakka is the Consultant vascular surgeon in charge for the Brighton Vascular Access Fellowship.

**The Experience**

The Educational travel grant allowed me to attend the Vascular Access Fellowship in Brighton during January and February 2020.

I decided to apply to Mr El Sakka’s fellowship after reading the article his Department published in 2018 in the Journal of Vascular Access (1). I have always had an interest in Access Surgery and the care of renal patients, unfortunately during my training I had little exposure to such procedures.

For this reason, I contacted Mr El Sakka to inquire about this Fellowship and was kindly accepted. I joined Mr El Sakka and his team of highly trained staff in January 2020 for an intense 8-weeks program, which revealed to me a new and exciting aspect of Vascular Surgery.

The team has two operating lists a week, both run with extreme efficiency and very smooth turnovers, thanks to a well-practiced synergy. The whole team of surgeons, anesthetists and nurses is dedicated, competent as well as exceptionally friendly.

I performed a total of 38 vascular access cases, during which I was closely and skillfully supervised by Mr El Sakka and his team of surgeons: Mr Harvey, Mr Ahmed and Mr Salman.

The fellowship has been running for several years now, therefore a solid and reproducible level of training has been achieved. By the end of the program, I felt confident with performing independently the basic access procedures, however, the benefits of this program were not confined to Access Surgery. I had also the unique opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the upper limb’s anatomy and I considerably improved my anastomotic technique.

The Department’s caseload is impressive, therefore I had the chance to witness also more sophisticated and rare access operations.

My time in Brighton was not only dedicated to Access Surgery, in fact I also participated in the multidisciplinary meeting, during which complex cases of vascular surgery are discussed. Moreover, I had plenty of opportunities to observe aortic procedures, carotid endarterectomies, lower limb bypass procedures and amputations.

Outside of the operating theatre I particularly enjoyed seeing patients in the weekly clinic, during which I gained precious experience in planning, US-scanning as well as in dealing with possible complications of Access Surgery.

**Conclusion**

I believe this kind of visiting experiences is of the utmost importance for young surgeons for two reasons. First of all, they allow us to challenge ourselves in a new environment, far from the familiar contest of our parenting hospital. Old habits can be broken and good behavior nurtured. Secondly, visiting another country and another culture usually brings forward new ideas and perspectives, which ultimately constitute the essence of change.

I would like to thank Mr El Sakka and his lovely renal team for this fruitful experience. My gratitude goes also to the European Society of Vascular Surgery for granting me this opportunity.

I definitely recommend the fellowship to anyone interested and should anyone desire more information I shall gladly provide it.

To contact Mr El Sakka about the Fellowship: karim.elsakka@doctors.org

1. [J Vasc Access.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29218696) 2018 Mar;19(2):162-166. doi: 10.5301/jva.5000821. Epub 2018 Feb 19.