**Fellowship Report**

Named Fellowship:

The Oral – Head and Neck Surgery / Microvascular Surgery Fellowship

Faculty:

Dr. Joshua Lubek and Dr. Donita Dyalram

Location:

University of Maryland, Baltimore. USA

Dates:

June 2023 to July 2024

*Introduction*

I had the privilege of undertaking a fellowship in Head and Neck Surgical Oncology and Microvascular Reconstruction at the esteemed University of Maryland Oral and Maxillofacial Department. The fellowship was originally created by Dr. Bob Ord, a British trained surgeon, who spent part of his early career at Sunderland Royal Hospital, the hospital that I myself am returning to at the completion of my fellowship.

This fellowship provided me with an invaluable opportunity to delve deeply into the intricate realm of head and neck oncology, refining my surgical skills in microvascular reconstruction while also gaining comprehensive knowledge in patient management and interdisciplinary collaboration.

*Clinical Experience*

Throughout the fellowship, I actively participated in a wide array of clinical cases spanning the spectrum of head and neck oncology. Under the guidance of experienced faculty, I was involved in the diagnosis, treatment planning, and surgical interventions for patients with various malignancies affecting the head and neck region. This encompassed cancers of the oral cavity, oropharynx, larynx, hypopharynx, thyroid, and parotid gland, among others.

A significant portion of my time was dedicated to microvascular reconstruction techniques. I performed microvascular procedures for complex ablative defects.

A particular focus for my learning, was the use of composite free flap reconstructions in maxillary defects. In the UK maxillary defects will commonly be prosthetically obturated. At the University of Maryland, the focus is on oral rehabilitation, in particular the use of dental implants placed into vascularised bone. I have honed techniques in the use of composite free flaps in the management of maxillary post-ablative defects, with a focus on subsequent oral rehabilitation.

Another area of focus was the development of skills related to a work horse ‘second bony flap’. In particular the development of competency in raising free flaps related to the subscapular axis.

I have also had the opportunity to develop skills in TORS. Namely the use of robotic surgery in the management of base of tongue malignancies.

*Research and Academic Activities*

In addition to clinical duties, I actively engaged in research endeavours aimed at advancing the field of head and neck oncology and microvascular reconstruction. I participated in research projects, contributed to literature reviews, and presented findings at a local conference. I am currently in the process of publishing the University of Maryland’s outcomes in comparing free flap reconstruction to prosthetic obturation for maxillary defects.

*Professional Growth*

The fellowship at the University of Maryland Oral and Maxillofacial Department has been instrumental in my professional growth and development as a head and neck surgeon. The exposure to complex cases, emphasis on surgical technique, research opportunities, and interdisciplinary collaboration have equipped me with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high-quality care to patients with head and neck malignancies when I return to the United Kingdom.

There is a quote on the fellowship website ‘The benefits of the fellowship may not be appreciated until years after one completes it.’ I one hundred percent believe that this is true. I just hope I don’t turn into one of those annoying individuals that always states how they use to do it on fellowship!

In conclusion, my fellowship experience in Head and Neck Oncology and Microvascular Reconstruction at the University of Maryland Oral and Maxillofacial Department has been immensely rewarding. I am deeply grateful for the mentorship, guidance, and opportunities afforded to me during this period. I am confident that the knowledge and skills acquired will serve as a solid foundation for my future career endeavours.

Without the kind generosity of BAOMS, and its members, I would not have been able to undertake this fellowship, something I’ve wanted to do since day one of specialty training. Not only have I had a fantastic professional experience, but personally the family and I have had a wonderful time, even though my young children now speak with an American ‘twang’!