

Name: Karolina Afors

Position held: Clinical Fellow in Minimal Access Gynaecology

Name of the centre visited: IRCAD, Strasbourg

Duration of work placement: 1 year
(November 2013-November 2014)

The BSGE bursary I was awarded was used to help fund a clinical fellowship in minimal access surgery in France. During this time I undertook a clinical fellowship in IRCAD, Strasbourg an internationally renowned laparoscopic surgical training centre. During my placement I performed and assisted in over 100 gynaecological minimal access procedures. These included myomectomies, total laparoscopic hysterectomies, surgical excision of deep infiltrating endometriosis – including bowel resections, and laparoscopic sacrocolpopexy. I also assisted in various surgical procedures including radical hysterectomies and pelvic and para aortic lymphadenectomies. I had the privilege of working under the guidance of my supervisor Prof Wattiez, who served as a great mentor and teacher during my placement and continues to do so.

During my fellowship I regularly reviewed, edited and created online videos and educational material for publication on a freely accessible website called “websurg”. I also served as part of the faculty for several laparoscopic courses covering a wide variety of subjects such as suturing, anatomy, endometriosis and oncology. I also helped design a gynaecological anatomy course, which subsequently has been incorporated into the regular curriculum at IRCAD. I was also heavily involved with the design and implementation of the Winner’s project by writing assessment questions, designing lectures and organising training days. I also had the opportunity to train as serve as an examiner for the European Academy and Winner’s Project, a new online educational programme for laparoscopists consisting of both formative and summative assessments.

I also attended and presented at various internationally recognised conferences such as MESGE, EBCOG, World endometriosis symposium – Atlanta and ESGE. Throughout this placement I was also involved in research and most recently in a retrospective study of patients with bowel endometriosis comparing different surgical techniques and their effect on symptoms relief, fertility outcomes and recurrence rates. I hope to publish the results of this study shortly. I have also been involved in several research projects the results of which have been published in internationally recognised journals.

This fellowship enabled me to significantly improve my laparoscopic skills by providing a systematic surgical approach for complex endometriosis cases. It also provided me with the opportunity to increase my knowledge specifically within the realms of clinical anatomy. It has served as an invaluable experience and has enabled me to transfer my skills to the UK where I was recently successfully appointed to the advanced ATSM in benign laparoscopy. This fellowship gave me the opportunity to work within a different global health system. It also exposed me to a new culture and allowed me to significantly improve my French linguistic skills.