

Our experience: from London and Glasgow urology, to the world down under

BY IBRAHIM IBRAHIM AND TOM REID

In November 2023, we were privileged to have been hosted at the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand's (USANZ) annual trainee week in the beautiful city of Adelaide, South Australia. Each year, USANZ organises a week for their local trainees and kindly invites trainees from various urological associations globally. With the support from BAUS Section of Trainees (BSoT) and The Urology Foundation (TUF), we proudly made the journey from London and Glasgow (seemingly far apart, but in Australian geography, we are neighbours!).

The week programme

The five-day programme commenced with mock written and viva examinations for those preparing to sit the FRACS exam (the equivalent of ST5 and ST6 trainees). This comprehensive educational initiative covered most aspects of the curriculum, employing a blend of lectures, group tutorials, quizzes, discussions, and interactive educational games; testament to the tireless work of Dr Rick Catterwell who convened the week.

In addition to the academic marvels, multiple social dinners provided an excellent platform for networking: mingling with fellow trainees, seasoned mentors, the USANZ committee, and an array of international delegates – a true urology soirée. Just when we thought the hospitality could not get any better, the USANZ team arranged for the international delegates to attend a nature reserve to see some native Australian wildlife up close.

Our motivations to attend

Our motivations to apply for the opportunity were identical – we were both preparing to sit the FRCS(Urol) exam and aspiring to gain experience with a fellowship in Australia. This event went beyond our expectations as we covered the curriculum in-depth and built and shared our network of urologists in the opposite time zone.



From left to right: Tom Reid (London trainee), Rick Catterwell (USANZ Convener) and Ibrahim Ibrahim (Glasgow trainee).

Observations and impressions

We found many similarities within urological practice and training between Australia / New Zealand and the UK, however there were also some key differences. Although training takes approximately the same duration and the curriculum content is similar (just structured differently), we were impressed by the knowledge and abilities of our urological colleagues down under. Training posts are notably very challenging to secure and typically more years of experience are required prior to commencing training. The wider urological community in Australia / New Zealand push their trainees to prepare for the exam as soon as they start training. Very evidently, the private sector is significantly more extensive in Australia / New Zealand where trainees have the opportunity to assist, although the training predominantly occurs in the public hospitals. Theatre lists were notably more varied with open cystectomies, percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL),



International delegates attending with USANZ organisers Deb, Jenny and Dr Rick Catterwell.

TRAINEES' FORUM

nephrectomies and core urology all on the same list. Due to the lack of centralisation (clearly challenging in such a geographically large region), high-volume sub-specialised units were not as prevalent as they are in the UK, motivating Australasian trainees to gain fellowship expertise in the UK.

After the event

There was no doubt that we would both extend our stay, much again for similar reasons – catch some sun, sand, surf, family and friends. Furthermore, extending our networking by visiting various urology departments across Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane meant we got a feel for the reality of urological practice where we hope to gain experience in the near future.

Applying for the opportunity

BSoT made the application process very straightforward and there was no hesitation in applying for the experience. Ultimately, we had just a few paragraphs and our CVs to translate our motivations and drive for the opportunity to attain the award. The timing was perfect at our stages of training and our aspirations to build relationships for future fellowships drove our personal statements. We hoped not only to benefit considerably from this experience, but we also wished to represent BSoT in the best manner possible, both formally and socially (we probably didn't stop talking to everyone late into every night!).

Summary

We have been blessed with this opportunity to learn, collaborate and network in a format beyond any expectations we could have imagined. Having only met on this experience, we have developed a urological brother-like bond between London and Glasgow, with

overseas colleagues and friends from Australasia to Japan to Canada.

Our utmost thanks to the warmth and welcoming nature of Deb and Jenny from USANZ who worked extra hard to accommodate us; and Dr Rick Catterwell whose dedication to the programme was hugely admirable. This experience was made possible by the incredible generosity of USANZ, BSoT and TUF and words cannot fully express our gratitude.

Useful links

www.usanz.org.au
www.baus.org.uk/professionals/bsot
www.theurologyfoundation.org

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