

3 weeks Observership at Gynecological Oncology department Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), Manhattan, New York 16th of October – 3rd of November 2017

As a fellow in Gynecological oncology surgery at Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm Sweden I was encouraged to seek experience from an international center during my educational period. I decided to apply for an Observership at MSKCC as they have been ground breaking in the field of gynecological oncology surgery in the latest decade. I applied for a 3 weeks stay as I was not allowed to participate directly in the care of patients only watch operations and participates in rounds, MDK's and lectures. I figured that would be sufficient time to get an overview. As an applicant you need to have a sponsor and I got the honor to be accepted as the adept of Dr Abu-Rustum chief of the department.

In the department there are 2300 surgeries per year in 2 centers. The main campus of MSKCC is located on York avenue between 67th and 68th street where most of the major surgeries (laparotomies) are done. Since januari 2016 they also have a fast track surgery clinic; Josie Robertsson surgical center, located on York Avenue and 60th street where much of the laparoscopic and robotic surgery takes place. The patient operated at Josie's will go home the same day if there aren't any complications. There are 12 surgeons at the department, each operating 2 days a week. About half of the operations are benign but there is high volume of gynecological malignancies with 450 cases of endometrial cancer, over 200 cases of advanced ovarian cancer, around 80 cases of cervical cancer and some vulva cancer cases as well. There is also a substantial amount of risk reducing procedures on women with BRCA mutation or Lynch syndrome.

As an observer you are allowed to watch any gynecological surgical procedure you want. All the attendants are welcoming and there are great facilities to watch the surgeries as there are cameras in the OR lamps enabling you to follow each surgical steps. Furthermore many of the operations are laparoscopic or robotic assisted. I got to see many different procedures especially on ovarian cancer and endometrial cancer patients executed by skilled surgeons.

I was especially interested in the robotic surgery as MSKCC is a high volume center in that field. There are 9 robots at the institution and the 10th is coming. Most of the endometrial cancer cases and parts of the cervical cancer is operated on in robot and on both patient groups they have applied the sharp ICG sentinel node technique since 2008. I got introduced for the laparoscopic technique which has additional features with a pin point and heat mapping of the nodes extra to the ICG firefly mapping. I participated in MDK 3 times where complex cases were discussed, mainly discussion on whether to give adjuvant therapy on operated patients as well as discussions on rare histological diagnosis. This was really meaningful as they have a higher volume of rare cases if compared to my own clinic. Furthermore there were interesting lectures every Thursday on relevant subjects.

In addition to this I got to spend some time with the fellows and surgeons with interesting discussion. I also met other international observers so new important contacts have been established I am really grateful for the financial support from NFOG that made it possible for me to go on this unforgettable visit at MSKCC in New York City.

Stockholm 21st of November 2017, Kolbrún Pálsdóttir Gyn Oncology section
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