

Clinical visit at Karolinska University Hospital, Solna, Department of women's and children's health; gynaecological oncology group - Stockholm, Sweden - NF #229

The NFOG Fund generously supported part of my expenses related to a three-month clinical stay at Karolinska University Hospital, Solna in Stockholm, Sweden at the Department of women and children's health. I joined the gynaecological oncology group lead by associated Professor Henrik Falconer and his wonderful team of highly competent and skilled doctors. The visit was part of my EXPU expert training in onco-gynaecology.

From the very first moment I felt so welcome. I was met with friendliness, approachability, inclusiveness, smiles and an extremely warm attitude by all the members of the team including the nurses working at the department, the outpatient clinic and the surgical ward.

I arrived on the first of February at Arlanda airport. The snow was falling quietly from the sky covering Stockholm, the lakes were frozen and the air was cold and clean. I left on the 30. of April on a warm and sunny day, the trees were green and all the flowers were blooming - after three inspirational, educational and rewarding months with a bit of sadness in my mind having to say goodbye but also looking forward to go home to Denmark to use all the things that I had learned during my stay.

The primary purpose of my clinical stay was to observe and learn surgical proficiencies in gynaecological oncology with special emphasis on robotic surgical procedures. The gynaecological oncology group at Karolinska University Hospital is working as part of a Pelvic Surgical Cancer Team basically separated from the benign gynaecologists and the obstetricians. This allows the surgeons of the gynaecological oncology team to solely focus on cancer treatment, surgical procedures and research within gynaecological cancer. They work in a relatively small and close-knit group characterised by high surgical skills, professionalism and mutual respect and share a working community with gastroenterologist and urologist with common multidisciplinary conferences etc. One of the highly inspiring inputs of my stay was to work with the nerve sparing procedure of the robot assisted radical hysterectomy used for cervical cancer treatment and the standardized approach of all the team members to the robot assisted procedures including the identification of lymphatic vessels during the sentinel procedure according to a consistent scheduling. A practice of videotaping both simple and especially complicated robot assisted procedures for later evaluation and education was also very inspirational encouraging prospective learning and enabling detailed discussions of completed operations. Another very inspiring aspect of the gynaecological oncology group was the fact that they were able to incorporate research into their daily clinical work with a high number of patients being included in different research projects. The surgical treatment of disseminated ovarian cancer was carried out as highly extensive surgery encompassing extended surgery in the upper abdominal cavity using fine dissecting procedures exposing anatomical landmarks to a very high extent. The handling of vulva-cancer patients was also very inspirational with photo-documentation of all patients before and after surgery, the application of vulva-flap-plastics to a high extent and national videoconferences with discussion of all vulva-cancer patients once every week.

I am grateful to NFOG for supporting my stay at Karolinska University Hospital and for supporting my expert training in onco-gynaecology.

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