

Urogynaecology fellowship, Pelvic Floor Unit, Monash Health, Melbourne, Australia, Jan 2018 – June 2019

I worked as an overseas urogynaecology fellow in the Pelvic Floor Unit at Monash Health in Melbourne, Australia, for 18 months.

Monash Health is a tertiary level teaching hospital. The Pelvic Floor Unit, led by Associate Professor Anna Rosamilia, manages all possible conditions related to pelvic floor dysfunction. The team treats many conditions (e.g. interstitial cystitis and urethral diverticula), that are typically treated by the urologists, not the gynaecologists, in my Finnish hospital. As a tertiary referral centre, the team also diagnoses and manages a relatively big number of mesh complications from the area. It was amazing to work in a team focused to treat purely pelvic floor problems. The level of knowledge was high; they were on top of the current literature, and the clinical experience was very strong.

As part of my work, I ran pelvic floor outpatient clinics and perineal clinics together with the team. Further, I ran urodynamics clinics together with a specialist nurse. The surgeries included a large variety of vaginal and laparoscopic procedures. High uterosacral ligament suspension was one of the commonly performed procedures which was a new technique for me. Due to increased mesh complication awareness among patients, the number of native tissue anti-incontinence surgeries was increasing. I wonder, whether I ever get to do a fascial sling or a Burch colposuspension again, since they are still a rarity in Finland.

Apart from the clinical work, the team had a strong research involvement. Fellows had time allocated for research in their roster. To mention some of the projects, I was involved in an RCT to study the efficacy of vaginal laser in treating stress urinary incontinence, and a long- term follow-up of retropubic slings. I also worked closely together with the basic science researchers of the Hudson Institute. One of my roles was to perform sheep surgeries in a research project investigating mesh materials and stem cell therapy for pelvic organ prolapse.

During my stay in Australia, I also spent five weeks as a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney with Professor Hans Peter Dietz. I learned to perform translabial ultrasound imaging, saw many interesting patients and finished a research project with Prof Dietz. After the scholarship, I continued to use translabial scanning in Melbourne in diagnostics and follow-up of research patients.

I took part and presented my research in multiple conferences around Australia. I made numerous invaluable contacts during my stay. Many of these will definitely last for a lifetime. Collaboration in research continues.

My appointment was an 18-month honorary appointment. I moved to Melbourne with my surgeon husband and three children. I am deeply grateful for NFOG in helping to cover the expenses of this massive project. I am happy to be able to state that it was completely worth all the effort.

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