

EPSRC travelling fellowship 2013

I would like to thank the EPSRC for awarding me the first EPSRC travelling fellowship. It was a great educational opportunity and an amusing experience.

My main goal for this fellowship was to improve my knowledge in hand surgery, which led me to visit three renowned centers based in Italy, Switzerland and Sweden, each for one month.

My travel started at the Unit of Microsurgery of the CTO Hospital in Turin, under the supervision of Dr Pierluigi Tos. The hospital is one of the biggest trauma centers and spinal units in Italy and has a huge load in reconstructive microsurgery. I then moved to the Plastic Surgery and Hand Surgery Unit of the University Hospital in Zurich, where Dr. Nicole Lindenblatt introduced me to the hand team. The Unit is a big center covering every aspect of reconstructive, aesthetic and hand surgery, with a busy trauma service and an excellent training program. Finally, I moved to the Plastic Surgery and Hand Surgery Unit of the Sahlgrenska University Hospital in Gothenburg, under the supervision of Dr Giovanni Maltese. This huge unit hosts numerous experts in hand, wrist and brachial plexus surgery, as well as microsurgery, craniofacial surgery and gender reassignment surgery. The Unit also hosts the Swedish National Center for Reconstructive Hand Surgery in Tetraplegia.

In all the three centers, I was involved in every aspect of the clinical activity, including theater, outpatient clinic and teaching activities. During my staying, I was also able to join the Hand Cadaver course in Zurich, and to participate as a tutor in the Microsurgical basic course in Turin and in the Microsurgical advanced course in Gothenburg.

This fellowship provided me exposure to a wide range of hand pathologies, and was a unique opportunity to learn more about the treatment of very specific diseases and how they are approached in different countries and clinical settings. Also, it allowed me to widen my network of scientific collaborations, which are going ahead also after the fellowship, and make new friends.

I returned to Sicily with the great feeling of having improved my clinical skills, and of being able to offer better clinical care to my patients.

I greatly recommend my young colleagues to apply for this unique travelling fellowship!! Don't miss this opportunity!

Francesca Toia