

Fellowship Report – Mr David W. Neilly  
Royal Adelaide Hospital, South Australia

I am very grateful for the funding provided by Zimmer Biomet, awarded by the SCOT committee for expenses incurred on my fellowship. Completing training and travelling abroad for fellowship can be a particularly stressful time and this funding was very much appreciated by both me and my family. It helped us greatly with travel costs which were also increased by the pandemic and enabled me to significantly enhance my training with experience abroad before taking up Consultant practice in Scotland.

**Fellowship period: September 2020 - September 2021**

**Location: Royal Adelaide Hospital, South Australia**

Like many others my fellowship plans were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I had originally organised to start my fellowship in July 2020, leaving the UK with my wife Claire and two young children in June 2020. Despite 3 years of planning, this was thrown into disarray when the Australian government closed their borders to international arrivals, and at one stage I did wonder if I going to manage an international fellowship at all.

We persevered and after many calls to immigration, obtained exemption to travel status with support from my host hospital. Finding a flight was the next challenge but eventually thanks to a helpful customer service agent at Singapore airlines our family was on the way to Australia in September 2020.

I am very thankful for the support from my Training Program Director Mr David Cairns and Unit Clinical Director Mr Andrew Johnston during this uncertain time for me. Knowing that I had job security beyond my CCT date was invaluable whilst trying to organise our move to the other side of the planet.

Fellowship started with a mandatory 2 week Australian quarantine. This was not as bad as expected. Our 5 year old and 3 year old took this in their stride, enjoying it so much they still to this day ask if they can go back to the same hotel.

After this brief hiatus, I was straight into work at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. As an 800-bed regional major trauma centre, it is the largest tertiary referral hospital in South Australia with a high volume of both trauma and elective work. The hospital itself was recently rebuilt in 2017 at a cost of \$2.44 billion with cutting edge trauma and elective facilities and is one of the most expensive buildings ever constructed. Part of my experience was working in such fantastic facilities, however as is true throughout life it is the people you work and interact with that have the biggest impact on you. On my second day I ended up scrubbing in for a 6 hour case revision nailing and impaction grafting for a non-union of a distal femur with Prof. Bogdan Solomon. Prof Solomon is a unique character whom I enjoyed working with very much. He taught me the modified Gibson approach, which is a useful addition to the arthroplasty and trauma surgeon's armoury for visualising the posterior column of the pelvis.

Fortunately, at the time of my fellowship South Australia was not severely affected by the pandemic. Although the quarantine entry rules were tough, there was zero COVID cases for over 200 days in the state whilst I was there. All of the trauma and elective operating went ahead in full capacity, so my operative experience was not compromised. The day-to-day timetable involved a mixture of trauma and elective theatre lists, with my own trauma clinic which I ran on Monday afternoons. Using my own clinic to bring patient's back to following surgery was a particularly useful experience. Two trauma lists were planned each day at the RAH, with infected revision arthroplasty cases and periprosthetic fracture cases generally booked on the complex trauma list which I was usually timetabled for. I also ensured I spent plenty of time in the elective theatres gaining experience with primary and revision arthroplasty, and some soft tissue knee work.

I spent a lot of time with Mr Jake Jagiello, Consultant Tumour Surgeon originally from Stanmore UK but now working in Adelaide at both the Royal Adelaide and Flinders Hospital. He really put a special effort in making the experience for the fellows' spectacular. As well as getting involved with some unique tumour cases, he took us to several Australian Football League games to see the 'The Power' Port Adelaide and went above and beyond to look after me and my family in South Australia.

Research was also an important component of my fellowship, as it was my duty to run one of the randomised control trials going on in the department under the supervision of Prof. Mark Rickman, one of my fellowship supervisors. This was a good experience and a great addition to the CV. Prof. Pete Smitham was really helpful and got me involved in some teaching and research projects as well as lots of trauma and elective cases. Both originally from the UK, they have a lot of NHS experience and along with Mr Jagiello very kindly organised Consultant interview practice with me during the second half of my fellowship when I was approaching my job interview back in Scotland. Mr Sam Benveniste was another brilliant mentor who I spent a lot of time with in theatre, and as a previous Canadian fellow he hosted several ice hockey viewing nights which the fellows enjoyed very much.

As well as my experience working at the RAH I was very fortunate to gain experience in robotic surgery, and obtained certification whilst on fellowship. I am particularly indebted to Mr Rob Baird and Mr Rob Fassina from the Adelaide Hip and Knee clinic who took me under their wing and taught me the nuances of robotic hip and knee surgery and answered the many questions I had about the robotic system. I now use the robot in my regular elective practice and many of the techniques they taught me. Michael Taylor (MPS) and Heath Commane also spent a lot of time teaching me and the other fellows at their offices in South Australia, which was invaluable.

Part of the reason my fellowship in South Australia was such a brilliant experience was working with the trainees in the SA rotation, and also the other fellows who were there at the same time. Chris Day from Vancouver, Canada and Will Poole from Brighton, UK are now lifelong friends. Our families spent a lot of time together, and between us we put a solid effort in attempting to visit all the top wineries in the region. For me and my family, fellowship year was such a unique life experience. I would highly recommend Scottish orthopaedic trainees undertake an overseas fellowship if circumstances allow, and the

funding award from the SCOT committee helped me significantly advance my surgical skills before Consultant practice.