

Report on my Clinical Visit to Institute De La Main, Clinic Jouvenet, Paris from 11-13 September 2013.

I was fortunate to be in receipt of an educational travel bursary from the BSSH earlier this year. I was paid an honorarium of €1000.00 to cover the cost of my airfare and some of my living expenses whilst I undertook a clinical visit with Caroline LeClerc in L’Institute De La Main in Paris. I had applied for the bursary earlier in the year after reading about it on the BSSH website.

The reason for my travel was mainly to assess my treatment of Dupuytrens contracture and my use of Dernofasciectomy as a treatment modality. Aware that Caroline LeClerc was one of the world respected authorities on Dupuytrens and also being from Dupuytrens home city, I thought it appropriate to request a short clinical visit. Furthermore despite having treating Dupuytrens contracture since my SPR days I had a small number of nerve injuries over a short period of time and this unsettled me. My technique was unchanged and I was therefore concerned that perhaps I needed to review my practice. This was also a good opportunity to show my commitment to reflective practice and the duties of a doctor registered with the GMC.

I arrived from Dublin on the Wednesday and went directly to L’Institute De La Main where I met with Caroline LeClerc. I had never met her before and she was very welcoming and pleasant and we had a discussion regarding the aims of my visit and what I hoped to achieve. I told her that I was interested in Dupuytrens Contracture and she was very pleased that I was able to come. We then undertook a ward round seeing the patients for the next days operating list and discussed some complex wrist pathology and I was pleased that she asked my advice on these cases. She also introduced the new technique of mini-tightrope CMC suspension and we had a discussion about this.

Having spent a pleasant evening in a small (albeit expensive) apartment very nearby I arrived in L’Institute De La Main early the next morning to spend the day observing and assisting Dr LeClerc operating. The first case was a complex distal radial ulnar joint dislocation which was longstanding. This was to be followed by a dermofasciectomy of an index finger in a young man. I would also see endoscopic carpal tunnel release, trigger finger release and 1st CMCJ excision and suspension arthroplasty with a mini tightrope. During the morning Dr LeClerc was educating the registrars and involved me fully in the conversation. She requested I scrub in for the dermofasciectomy and I was very pleased to see that she performed the technique in a similar manner to myself and took a similar length of time. I noted that she used relatively small tie-over sutures which changed my practice. I enjoyed the way she set the patient up with regards to the lead hand and the technique of cutting glove fingers off and holding the fingers with this. This appealed to me and I have been using it since. She was meticulous in her dissection and I enjoyed the fact that she dissected the Dupuytrens with a scissors rather than a knife. All in all after two hours and a bit of work and many photographs the job was done and I was very pleased with it. On reflection I saw that my technique was almost identical. Once the operating list was finished in mid afternoon we obtained lunch from the clinic restaurant. I would advise one not to make a judgement on French cuisine from this experience! Thereafter I met with Dr LeClerc and had a lengthy discussion on Dupuytrens contracture and she presented numerous lectures to me that she had undertaken including risk benefits and follow up. The French health system was discussed and the fact that they perform dermofasciectomy finger by finger for “clinical” reasons despite reimbursement issues. The day

came to an end and I returned to the apartment with a book that Dr LeClerc had co-written. This was to enable me to look into 1st web space Dupuytrens and the incisions for this/ approach for this.

The next morning I awoke having had a very delicious meal out in a French Restaurant that I could highly recommend to anyone going to Clinic Jouvenet. I arrived at 8am to join Dr LeClerc in her clinic. Again she introduced me to each patient and requested if they spoke English. I attempted a little French much to the amusement of the staff. We saw numerous patients including some with 1st CMCJ suspension arthroplasty with mini tightrope. Whilst I had no idea why one would "bother" performing this when there are such good results from trapeziectomy and LRTI, my interest was piqued by the fact that there was no tendon healing required and therefore rehabilitation could be very prompt. I saw the early results and some subsequent results and x-rays and realised that for patients who wished to have rapid rehabilitation this could well be an option. We saw patients with Dupuytrens and discussed the Tubiana classification which I have now commenced using. We saw some carpal injuries and we discussed practice. It was during this time that I met patients who had come from all over France and even further afield (Morocco) to have their surgery undertaken by Dr LeClerc and the team at Clinic Jouvenet. Dr LeClerc excused herself after clinic as she was visiting Raoul Tubiana who was very ill in hospital. She suggested I attend the operating room with one of her junior colleagues, a consultant named Dr Alexander Kilinc. He was a fine example of a Parisian and was welcoming. We undertook another fasciotomy and again showed that my technique, whilst perhaps being slightly slower than his, was very similar. We also discussed techniques for recalcitrant trigger finger and I observed endoscopic carpal tunnel technique release using the technique I am familiar with.

The day ended in the early evening. I made my way back to the airport, bought gifts for my family and flew home to Dublin satisfied that my surgical technique and results were comparable to one of the very best units in the world.

I am very grateful to the BSSH for the honorarium that enabled me to undertake this clinical visit. It was very memorable and my experience in Paris was very pleasant and I found L'Institute De La Main very inspiring. I am particularly grateful to Dr Caroline LeClerc for her generosity of spirit in welcoming me, allowing me to scrub, discussing in detail her experience and in giving of her time. I would also like to thank Dr Alexander Kilinc for his time also which was generous and freely given. Thanks also to Professor Christophe Mathoulin for connecting me with Dr LeClerc. I am of course most grateful to my lovely wife and three children for allowing Daddy to be away. You have all helped my future patients! Thanks!

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