

# **BSSH Education and Travel Bursary 2025**

**Plastic Surgery Department, Ganga Hospital**

**Coimbatore, India**

**15<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

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## Introduction

I am a post-CCT Hand and Wrist Fellow at University College London Hospitals, having completed my Trauma and Orthopaedics training on the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore rotation. I have gained 18 months of hand and wrist experience across district general hospital and major trauma centre settings, as well as six months in peripheral nerve injury. I was keen to gain exposure to a high-volume orthoplastic service with international recognition for both clinical outcomes and education.

I am grateful to the British Society for Surgery of the Hand for awarding me an Education and Travel Bursary, which enabled me to spend one week at Ganga Hospital in Coimbatore, India, from 15–20 September 2025.

## Overview of the visit



With Professor Sabapathy, Head of the Plastic Surgery Department

During my time at Ganga Hospital, I was based within the Plastic Surgery Department, under the supervision of Professor Sabapathy (Head of Department and internationally renowned plastic surgeon), Dr Hari Venkatramani (Consultant Plastic Surgeon), and Dr Praveen Bhardwaj (Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon), as well as their multidisciplinary teams.

I participated in daily trauma meetings, outpatient clinics, operating theatres, and rehabilitation services. Over the course of the week, I observed more than 40 operations spanning congenital hand surgery, replantation, fracture and non-union surgery, stiff joint management, tendon transfers, free tissue transfers, and brachial plexus surgery including nerve and functional muscle transfers. The breadth and volume of cases provided valuable exposure to a wide range of pathology and surgical approaches, highlighting key principles and surgical decision making.



Trauma Meeting



Outpatient clinic with Dr Praveen Bhardwaj and team

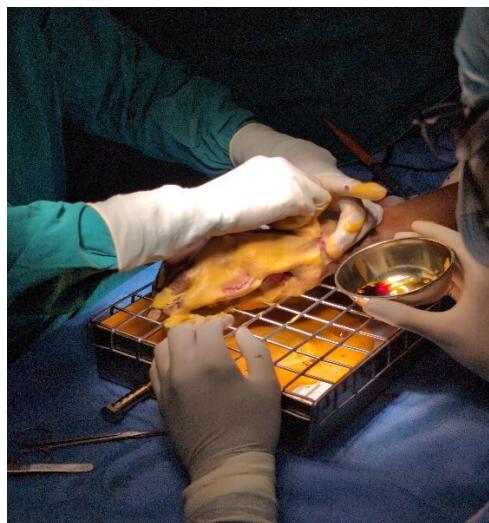
## **Learning and Leadership**

What stood out was not only the standard of surgical care provided, but the way teaching was incorporated into routine clinical activity. Discussion was practical, with emphasis placed on underlying principles and rationale rather than isolated techniques. This reinforced the importance of a strong theoretical foundation, developed through reading, to allow principles to be applied confidently in clinical practice.

Leadership was evident through clear structure and delegation. Roles and responsibilities were well defined. Staff at all levels were expected to take ownership of their work. This contributed to efficient team functioning and a consistent approach to patient care across the service.

## **Resourcefulness and Sustainability**

A consistent feature of practice at Ganga was an awareness of cost, sustainability, and access to care. Resource limitation was addressed pragmatically, with an emphasis on function, safety, and durability rather than unnecessary expense.



Intraoperative wound irrigation using a reusable tray

Examples included the reuse of thermoplastic splints for patients unable to afford new devices, the design of simple and robust prostheses focused on essential function, and wound care practices that reduced reliance on disposable materials. Measures such as using glass bottles with sterile water for irrigation and washing wounds in metal trays rather than disposable plastics demonstrated a practical approach to reducing waste without compromising care.

These observations reinforced that high-quality hand surgery is driven primarily by sound clinical judgement and thoughtful planning, rather than by access to expensive technology.

## **Multidisciplinary care**

Spending time with the physiotherapy and occupational therapy teams made it clear how well integrated rehabilitation was within the service. Communication was clear and efficient, planning was aligned early, and the pathway ran smoothly. There was a shared understanding of goals and standards across the team.

This reinforced that surgery is only one part of the patient journey, with functional recovery relying on coordinated multidisciplinary working. Teams worked from the same principles to deliver consistently high standards of care.

### **Shared learning and international collaboration**

During my visit, the department hosted visiting speakers, including Professor Soldado from Spain discussing obstetric brachial plexus injury, and Professor Goo Hyun Baek from Korea speaking on congenital hand conditions such as Apert syndrome. These sessions complemented the clinical teaching and provided further insight on subspecialty practice.

Interaction with other international observers, fellows, and local trainees was also valuable. Informal discussion and shared experience contributed to learning beyond the formal programme and provided insight into differing training pathways and clinical approaches.



Consultants, residents, fellows, observers, and international visiting speakers at Ganga Hospital



International Plastic and Orthopaedic Surgeon Observers in the operating theatres

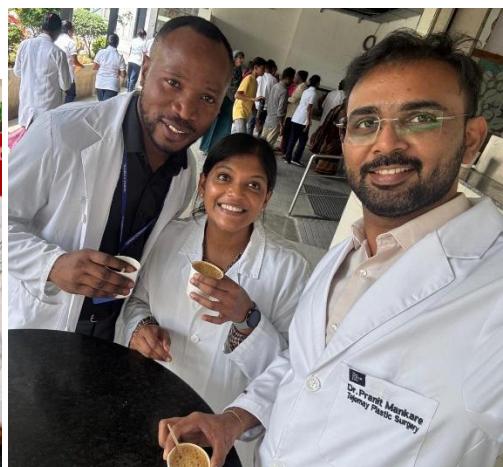
### Practical aspects of the visit

I stayed at the Ganga Flat, which provided affordable and convenient accommodation within a 10-minute walk of the hospital. The arrangement also facilitated interaction with other visiting clinicians, which was helpful both socially and educationally.

The hospital canteen offered good-quality food. Despite the busy clinical workload, there was an emphasis on taking time for meals, which contributed positively to the working environment.



Team breakfast at the Ganga Hospital canteen after the trauma meeting



Masala chai break between outpatient clinics at Ganga Hospital

## **Impact on my development as a hand surgeon**

This visit contributed to my development as a hand surgeon. Clinically, the volume and breadth of pathology provided exposure to reconstructive decision-making. My visit prompted reflection on how services can be organised to deliver consistent, high-quality care while remaining mindful of sustainability and access. The approach to leadership, delegation, and multidisciplinary working at Ganga has influenced how I think about my own future clinical and leadership practice.

## **Recommendation and future plans**

I would recommend Ganga Hospital to trainees and fellows seeking exposure to a high-volume orthoplastic service with a strong emphasis on education and multidisciplinary care. The range of pathology, volume of clinical activity, and integrated approach to training make it a valuable learning environment.

I am grateful to Professor Sabapathy and the wider Ganga team for their commitment to teaching, and to the British Society for Surgery of the Hand for supporting this visit through the Education and Travel Bursary.

I hope to return for a longer period of training in the near future.

## **Practical considerations- what to bring**

**Theatre shoes:** Provided on site, but these are sandal-style and may not be comfortable for long operating days. Bringing your own is advisable.

**Scrubs:** Available at the hospital; however, having one or two pairs of your own can be more comfortable for extended time in theatre.

**White coat:** Required for outpatient clinics and essential to bring.