

EDUCATION & TRAINING COMMITTEE



Education and Travel Bursary Report

Country visited	India
City or town	Coimbatore and Varanasi
Hospital/unit/clinic	Ganga Hospital, Association of Plastic Surgeons of India Conference (APSICON)
Dates visited	5 th November 2025 – 15 th November 2025
Please give an overview of what you saw / did	<p>I travelled to India as the recipient of a BSSH Travel Bursary as an APSI x BAPRAS fellow. Ganga Hospital has an international reputation for excellence in the management of hand and upper limb trauma, amongst many other things. It is a specialist plastic and orthopaedic hospital, with 650 beds and 38 operating theatres. I and the two other BAPRAS fellows were integrated into the usual timetable of the department. This started at 0730, meeting in the department seminar room either for teaching (PIA flap video demonstrating technique, upper limb anatomy quiz) or reviewing the recent admissions and surgeries. We then either went to clinic or the operating theatres. Both were extremely busy with a high volume of trauma, obstetric brachial plexus injuries and burn-related injuries. Contrary to my experience in the UK where clinic involves staying in one room and patients coming to the doctor, in Ganga they had multiple clinic rooms where patients were brought to, and we moved between them. This facilitated dressing changes and review by the physio team without impeding the flow. In theatre we were encouraged to move between cases to see as broad a range of procedures as possible. I was interested to see a range of local flap options being used to reconstruct lower limb trauma and diabetic foot wounds, including peroneus brevis and soleus flaps. It was also useful to see their approach to the management of mangled hand in action, including the planning and execution of abdominal/groin flaps for coverage.</p> <p>In our second week we travelled to Varanasi for the APSI Conference. This is a large event, well attended by the plastic surgery community. I particularly enjoyed the first day's sessions, which had video presentations of techniques, excellent for demonstrating the key points and building understanding. The conference included several parallel sessions across all areas of plastic surgery. Of note they trialled a "silent conference" where they had one large hall with three</p>

	presenting screens. The provision of headphones allowed you to tune in to the presentation you were interested in. There was also a busy social schedule of both dinners, visits to temples and boat trips along the Ganges to enjoy. The food was a particular highlight!
What were the best things about the visit?	The high volume of cases meant despite a short visit I felt I learnt a lot. The team were very welcoming, across the board and were very generous with their knowledge and time. There was a clear culture of working hard to produce the best outcome for their patients, which I really admired.
What problems did you encounter?	My main problems were travel related, with Air India providing several delays! However, nothing that would put me off going again.
What accommodation was provided?	Accommodation at Ganga was provided in a house belonging to the hospital. This was a 15-20min walk from the hospital. Rooms had en suites and each floor had a shared kitchen area, with fridge, hotplate and microwave available. Wifi was also included. In Varanasi I stayed in a local hotel.
Do you have an anecdote about your visit you can share?	Everyone at Ganga made us feel very welcome and went out of their way to help us during our stay.
Would you recommend this to someone else?	Yes.
How did this experience add to your development as a Hand Surgeon?	The opportunity to experience another healthcare system was very valuable as it prompted me to reflect on the things we do well in the NHS and where we can improve. I was also struck by the culture the senior consultants had embedded within the department, with a focus on continuing to develop and evolve to deliver the best results possible. I think this will stand me in good stead in my future career.
Your name:	Helen Stark
Hospital/Unit	John Radcliffe Infirmary/Plastic Surgery Dept.
Contact email: (optional)	helen.stark@nds.ox.ac.uk

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At the main entrance to the hospital (Mr Kavit Amin, Ms. Helen Stark, Ms.Rachel Enright L-R)



International fellows with Dr Raja Sabapathy and Dr Hari Venkatramani (Dr Edgar Mumba, Ms.Rachel Enright, Dr Sabapathy, Dr Venkatramani, Ms. Helen Stark, Mr Kavit Amin L-R)



BAPRAS x APSI contingent at APSICON 2025 (Mr Kavit Amin, Ms. Helen Stark, Mr Simon Wood, Ms. Rachel Enright, Mr Jaroslav Roszpopa upper row L-R; Ms. Freya Scutt, Ms. Reena Agarwal, Mr Paul McArthur, Ms. Natasha Christodoulides bottom row L-R)