

One year in Taiwan October 2013 by Mohamed Abdelrahman

From General to Plastics: Proud by the choice

By end of this month, September 2013, I have completed one year at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan. It has been a great journey full of hard work, great learning opportunities and friendships that may be for life.

My first year has had several rotations - first 3 months were in Burns Unit, then 4 months of Trauma – Limbs, and then 4 Months Microsurgery – Head& Neck. Now I have just finished 1 month of my 3 months of Craniofacial Trauma rotation.

Burns unit at CGMH is modern and state of the art, with 7 Burn ICU beds, several Burns beds, and 2 dedicated ORs, with 5 consultants, one chief resident and a lot of well trained speciality nurses.

I have spent great times, learning how to manage acute burns cases, Intensive Care management, Infection control, excisions, grafts, skin biosynthetic materials and how to deal with scars and post burns contractures. I have enjoyed every bit of the rotation, and it has been tough, as myself and only one resident have to look after all of the patients everyday and perform surgeries at the same time.

Next 4 months were in Trauma – upper and lower limbs, where we spent long hours – as most of the consultants do their on-calls on the same day of their elective list, and sometimes we finished the following day at 6am.

It was challenging both physically and mentally to catch up on all the techniques regarding hands and lower limbs. I gave it my best and used every opportunity to increase my knowledge and skills - I think I have left a good impression, as I used to be called to help on many more operations even after I have finished my official daily work.

My 3rd rotation was in Microsurgery, where CGMH is one of the biggest if not the biggest and busiest all over the globe, where you meet fellows from all parts of the world, and you exchange experiences with them. It was really a great time, and everybody was helpful, and also promised help in the future.

I was offered 1 month Lab training before I started the actual work - thereafter, I was guided through Flap harvest – as I haven't done perforator flaps before- it was tough and challenging, and I was frustrated at many occasions But with close help, monitoring and guidance, I could make it at the end.

I followed 2 attendings at my Microsurgery rotation, both with no residents. They dedicated their time to teach me every aspect, and I have to say they were really patient and helpful, as towards the end of my rotation, I was able to harvest the work-horse flaps at CGMH – ALT and Fibula – and helped in LDs and Radial Forearms. I have also done several anastamoses with great success.

Now, I have just started the Craniofacial Trauma course, and started learning how to approach different parts of the injured face, where you need to preserve function and cosmetics, and it's really a great rotation with straight forward algorithms and less stress.

Regarding my operative experiences, I have participated in :

60 Cases in the Burns unit , including excisions or skin grafting.

90 Trauma cases, including, fracture fixation, tendon repairs, limbs reconstruction, etc.

40 Free flaps, I harvested 18 myself and done several anastomoses.

30 Craniofacial Trauma cases.- I have done the last 3 Zygoma and mandibular fractures myself.

I have also participated in some researches, as I am a principal investigator in "Flaps perfusion study", which is quite interesting topic and might end up with good results.

I have helped in 5 publication writings, 2 submitted, one is accepted last week by PRS, which is about warping prevention of the costal cartilage in the nasal reconstruction.

I have made great and life long friendships with co-Fellows and visitors and my supervisors, which will help me much in the future.

I am thankful for **Interface Uganda**, which made my training and first year trip easy by funding me - a thing which made me comfortable, focused and less distracted during my time here, and I don't think I would have done that without your generous support.

My next rotation is composed of Craniofacial Trauma, Cleft Lip and Palate, Nerve Surgery (Brachial Plexus and Facial Reanimation), and Breast Surgery.

I hope by the end of next year, I will be able to go back home with much experience that can help my people and country. Though, as I have discussed with Dr Andrew Hodges on many occasions, I would need an expert support in my beginnings, as it's impossible to do everything by yourself, and I wish my learning will go smoothly back home as well, and I don't stop at this 2 years experience.

I wish your support would continue for my 2nd and last year and I will stick to my hard work to achieve my goals.

With much regards,

Mohamed

Taiwan