Visit to Sahlgrenska University Hospital and Carlanderska Hospital in Gothenburg, Sweden

Ms Cynthia-Michelle Borg MD (Malta) MD (London) FRCS (Gen Surg)

In May 2013, thanks to the AUGIS Travel Fellowship Award, I was able to visit the bariatric and metabolic surgery units at Sahlgrenska University Hospital and Carlanderska Hospital in Gothenburg, Sweden. My visit has given me the opportunity to further my knowledge into the pre, peri and post-operative care for patients undergoing bariatric and metabolic surgery. Mr Torsten Olbers and Mr Hans Lönroth, the surgeons who run the service in Gothenburg, are world renowned bariatric surgeons and have published extensively in peer-reviewed journals on the subject. They described the omega loop technique for Roux-en-Y gastric bypass back in 2003 (Olbers et al Obes.Surg 13:364-370) and are also co-authors on several of the Swedish Obese Subjects (SOS) study papers.

During my time in the unit, I had the opportunity to assist Mr Olbers in several gastric bypass cases using the omega loop technique and learn some important tips to avoid problems after this procedure.

Gothenburg is also the site for the SOS study secretariat. The SOS database has the largest follow-up cohort of morbidly obese patients and has given bariatric surgeons worldwide a great insight about the outcomes of surgical treatment for morbid obesity. I had the opportunity to meet up with Professor Lena Carlsson who currently leads the SOS study. We discussed recent and new studies coming out from the database and also what she thinks should be the updated indications for bariatric surgery. In her opinion, data from SOS clearly shows that surgery should be used offered to patients with lower BMI then the present cut offs to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes and improve cardiovascular risk factors.

Mr Olbers and Dr Lars Fandriks lead the Gast laboratory in Gothenburg which focuses on mechanisms of bariatric surgery. They are exploring different areas including energy expenditure and changes to GI physiology and histology post-operatively. Having completed my MD thesis looking at gut hormones after bariatric surgery, my visit to this lab was very beneficial to further my knowledge and academic interest in the subject.

There is also ongoing research at Sahlgrenska to evaluate the safety and outcome of gastric bypass surgery in adolescents and the natural history of obesity-associated conditions in this patient group. The prevalence of morbid obesity in adolescents and young adults has increased in the last two decades and these patients also have decreased life expectancy and increased physical and psychological morbidity when compared to their non-obese counterparts. Bariatric surgery in adolescents is still somewhat controversial as the long-term results and consequences on growth have not been fully elucidated. Hopefully this study from Gothenburg will be able to give us some answers.

The AUGIS Travel Fellowship award has allowed me to visit a high-volume morbid obesity and bariatric centre with a superb track record in bariatric and metabolic surgery research. I will be able to pass the clinical and academic knowledge that I gained from this visit on to my colleagues and other members of my multidisciplinary team. I would like to take the opportunity to thank AUGIS as well as Mr. Olbers and his team for facilitating this great visit.

Ms Cynthia-Michelle Borg MD (Malta) MD (London) FRCS (Gen Surg)
Sahlgrenska University Hospital

Ms Cynthia-Michelle Borg in theatre with Mr Olbers