



Report on the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland

International Bursary Award, 2009

Dr Paa Ekow Hoyte-Williams

"When it comes to prayer don't give up hang on" (Luke 18:1)

My experience at the 2009 ASGBI Congress can simply be summarized as 'Another great chapter in my surgical career as a trainee.' I would like to start by extending a warm hand of appreciation to the architects of the ASGBI International Bursary Awards who in May 2009 improved the surgical perspectives of six surgical trainees from different parts of the world.

The experience I acquired began the moment I arrived at the hotel, when I met five other young surgical trainees from other countries in Africa and Sri Lanka who shared a similar experience. Together every evening we met at the hotel lobby after a busy day exchanging ideas, experiences and encouraging each other.

I spent the first two days at the West Infirmary with Professor Patrick O'Dwyer and his friendly registrar Graham MacKay. It was fascinating to see Professor O'Dwyer operate. I later learnt he was the surgeon to whom cases otherwise deemed unsalvageable were sent to and most often he was able to improve the situation. To me, it represented restoration of hope to hopeless situations and the lesson I learnt there was the need to go all out in the acquisition of knowledge and skill to improve lives as well as explore all other means possible. The afternoon meetings were very enlightening. I also witnessed for the first time the application of the patient safety check list which has been demonstrated to significantly improve surgical outcomes.

At the Congress, the talk given by Dr. Willie John McBride was greatly motivating. It inspired in me the need for team work amongst my colleagues to improve our limitations

rather than sit back and complain and wait for external help which hardly improves our situation.

The scientific sessions were numerous and most of them were of immense relevance to me. Occasionally it was difficult to choose which one to attend because I would wish to participate in both at the same time. All the same whichever one I attend was worth it and added to my knowledge and exposure.

I was very impressed at the volume of research and presentations being done at various levels of training or specializations. It is one aspect lacking in my department I must confess.

The exposure to the numerous presentations has stimulated me to quickly put into action my resolve at the conference to venture into the area of research. I immediately enrolled for a Diploma in Project Design and Management being offered in my hospital (Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital - Kumasi) as a collaboration between the hospital, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine - UK. This would build my capacity for research. I have also inspired other trainees in my department to embark on research.

In addition I am collaborating with one of the presenters at the ASGBI to do a comparative study in Ghana on a topic presented and I hope to present this at an ASGBI congress when done.

This congress has been intellectually stimulating to me and illuminated my vision and ambition as an upcoming surgeon.

I appreciate the roles of the organizers who saw to our day to day comfort.

I would conclude with these brief suggestions:

- I would suggest that the pre conference period be extended beyond the two days to allow participants to have substantial time to grasp at least a concept in the U.K. hospital experience or better still acquire a skill.
- It would be beneficial if a brief organized session could be made for the award winners to meet other UK trainees for peer discussions/review which could foster further collaborations. In this session award winners may be given a few minutes to present their hospitals/institutions the challenges and opportunities available.

- The ASGBI could collaborate with the training institutions of the award winning persons so that the burden of sponsorship may be shared which could lead to more persons being sponsored.
- A website or a page in ASGBI website could be opened dedicated to past award winners where they could collaborate amongst themselves promoting the ideals of the bursary award as well as sharing how their participation has imparted their practice.
- Consideration should be given to providing a brief tour of the hosting city as part of the conference package since it may be the first time in UK for some award winners and they could add the history of the city to the knowledge acquired.

It has been a fantastic experience for me and I am very grateful for the honour and opportunity of being a beneficiary of this award. The experience acquired would not be in vain. Thank you, see you soon and God bless us all.

Dr Paa Ekow Hoyte-Williams