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Report about EFORT Foundation visiting fellowship

Before I start this report, I would like to thank the EFFORT FOUNDATION for giving me this incredible opportunity of doing a 4-week visiting fellowship in a renowned orthopaedic center in Europe. Also, I also must thank personally Prof. Stefano Zaffagnini for accepting me at Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute in Bologna, giving me a high quality and intensive educational experience, that I will definitely never forget. Special thanks to the Argentinian Association of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (AAOT) for considering me for this grant and last but not least I want to thank Sanni Hiltunen from EFFORT FOUNDATION for her diligence, prompt response and kindness in helping me with every doubt I had during the previous weeks to the fellowship.

When I was called by the AAOT and told that I had been given the EFFORT FOUNDATION Grant for a 4-weeks visiting fellowship, I could not believe it. After a first contact with Sanni a was given information regarding the fellowship and a list of possible hosts centers. Among them, Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute was my first choice, not only for being a place of orthopaedic excellence, especially the 2nd orthopaedic and traumatology clinic of Prof. Stefano Zaffagnini, which is highly renowned specially in knee surgery and sports Traumatology; but also because there is a long historical bond between Rizzoli Orthopaedic institute and South America in general, and with Argentina in particular, where very important Argentinian Orthopaedic Surgeons did part of their practice in the time of Prof. Vittorio Putti; so when I was told that Prof. Zaffagnini had accepted me for the visit I couldn't have felt happier. Communication with Prof. Zaffagnini's secretary Geraldina, in order to arrange every pre-fellowship aspect, was exceptional. She even made an internet search and gave me recommendations about finding a kinder garden institute for my little girl (I went to Bologna with my wife and daughter).

I arrived at Bologna 4 days before the onset date of my visiting fellowship, in order to accommodate to the apartment, and to get used to the city where I was going to spend a month in. Public transportation in Bologna it's easy picking, Busses have a regular frequency, and the ticket is 1.5 euros. But how I rented an apartment near the city's historical centre, close to the St. Orsola Hospital, and only 30 min walking away from Rizzoli Institute, through Margarita park (which has beautiful landscapes and it's perfect if you like running), I went there walking every day. I also had the chance during this 4-day window of visiting very interesting places in Bologna, such as Bologna's University, which is the oldest in the western world (don't miss the library and the museum of natural science), dating from 1088 b. C.; the Archigimnasium Library and the Anatomical theatre. Not forgetting to mention the city's historical centre, monuments and its many "gelaterias".

I started my visiting fellowship on May 28th. First, I met with Geraldina and she kindly introduced me to Prof. Zaffagnini, who was also very kind and interested to know about me and my orthopaedic interests. He also accompanied me to the operating room and introduced me to the personal and other staff and residents. They all were very kind and made me felt very comfortable. For my surprise, there were two other fellows during my staying, Max from Chile and David from Spain, which made my visit easier and it also gave me the opportunity of discussing my experience with theirs. They were really amazing, and we share social activities outside the institute as well.



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Surgical activities at Rizzoli take part from Monday to Friday, from 7:00 am to approximately 6 pm, in 9 different operating rooms. My main interest is knee arthroplasty (primary and revision), and there were a variety of these surgical procedures being held on every day activities. During my stay I mostly followed Prof. Zaffagnini, watched him and the rest of the staff (Dr. Romanoli, Dr. Mosca, Dr. Neri, Dr. Lopresti, Dr Grasi, etc. just to mention some of them) perform surgeries. They were really opened for questions and were very clear in their explanations. I also had the chance to take part in a few procedures as second assistant with Prof. Zaffagnini and Dr Mosca.

I found really interesting the way they perform knee primary replacements, especially the tibial cut aspect, which they do it hands free, without the tibial cutting guide, and get it right every time! I also found very useful their explanations and tricks in how to manage soft tissue balancing, to help correcting severe deformities, specially valgus ones, as well as patellar management tips, which I'm sure will be very useful for me in my daily practice. Watching software assisted pre-operative templating, was also very interesting, because I was used to do it the standard way with X rays and regular templates. Between procedures I found really useful the opportunity to discuss about personal experience, surgical tips, and strategies of addressing different pathologies with the main staff surgeons, highlighting their kindness and predisposition.

Twice a week I joined with Prof. Zaffagnini to his outpatient clinical practice at Codivilla-Putti poliambulatory center, close to the main Institute. It was very interesting and enriching to watch Prof Zaffagnini addressing knee pathologies and its diagnosis as well as preoperative and post-operative management. I could do consultations about that matter, and Prof. Zaffagnini was always very kind answering, and also asking about my opinion in some cases. Understanding and speaking a bit of Italian was very helpful specially in this area of work, even though the Professor speaks perfect English, patients do not, and you can take greater advantage in learning from the medical consultation if you understand Italian, so I recommend taking an Italian intensive course before the visit.

Overall at the finish of my 4-week visiting fellowship I was involved in more than 60 knee primary and revision procedures. I must mention that this visiting fellowship was without a doubt the greatest opportunity in my career so far and gave me the chance not only to improve my knowledge about knee arthroplasty, but also to share experience and make friends in the way! Even though it was a short term visiting fellowship, it was intensive enough to gain experience, learn from top surgeons and definitely improve my daily practice.

Deep respects,

Diego Rodriguez Hoya