



EFORT FOUNDATION

Report Visiting Fellowships

Name: **Nikolaos Kotsakis**

Country of residence: **Greece**

Country of visiting fellowship: **Switzerland**

Name of the host: **Prof. Dr. med. Ralph Hertel, Schulter und Ellbogen Zentrum, Lindenhospital, Bern**

Dates of visiting fellowship: **01/01/2020 – 31/07/2020**



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Report to EFORT:

When I was informed that I was honoured to be awarded the EFORT Foundation Visiting Fellowship program to Prof. Dr. med. Ralph Hertel at Lindenhofspital in Bern of Switzerland I was very enthusiast. Hence, I came in Bern at the beginning of January 2020 to start my fellowship being hosted by the "Schulter und Ellbogen Zentrum" of Lindenhofspital. Prof. Hertel has a great reputation among the orthopaedic community around the world due to his contribution to the orthopaedics. After spending seven months with Prof. Dr. med. Ralph Hertel, I could describe him not only as an outstanding mentor but also a man with an extraordinary personality.

1. Description of clinical activities during the fellowship

Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays were dedicated to the operation theatre whereas Tuesdays and Fridays to the consultation. The operation theatre days, started with a meeting with Prof. Hertel at his office at 7:30 where all cases of the day's program were being presented. We had a discussion about the medical record of the patients, the imaging and the operation we were going to perform. Afterwards, we were going to the operation theatre. There, I had the opportunity to scrub in for the cases of the day. Actually, I consider myself favored because there was not even one operation during my fellowship that I was not scrubbed in. During and after each operation Prof. Hertel was happy to answer every question about the procedure and even suggest me relevant papers to study. Every day included 4 - 5 operations in average, covering a large spectrum of shoulder, elbow and forearm pathology and trauma.

The consultation days started at 7:30 as well. Among the many cases of the day Prof. Hertel had to manage, there were a lot of unusual and complex cases requiring a special approach. After every case we had a discussion in detail and he was always eager to explain everything about the ultrasound sonography he had just performed, the MRI of the patient and the case in overall. If there was any call from the emergency room we would go to see the patient and discuss with him the therapeutical options. At the end of the day there was a computer assisted preoperative planning with patient-matched technology if the oncoming day's program included a total shoulder arthroplasty (TSA).

2. Description of scientific activities during the fellowship

During my seven month fellowship I was pleased to attend a cadaver lab session focused on both anatomic and reverse TSA, thanks to Prof. Hertel and MEDACTA, with the opportunity of receiving educational material about TSA from Medacta M.O.R.E. Institute. Moreover, we submitted the following two OVT Plus Content videos at the AAOS 2021 Annual Meeting:

- Tips and Tricks for Glenoid Exposure
- Reconstruction of Anterior Glenoid Defect With Iliac Crest Bone Graft

In addition, Prof. Hertel provided me ample material for upcoming tasks and papers after the end of my fellowship.

3. Description of social aspects of the fellowship

By the very first moment I arrived at Lindenhofspital I felt welcomed by Prof. Hertel, his secretaries and by the staff of the hospital in general. I had the opportunity to interact with other Swiss and learn many things about the swiss culture. In addition, I had the chance to improve my listening level in German, although the people in Bern speak Swiss-German which differs a lot from German. Besides, during my free weekends I visited beautiful cities like Zurich, Geneva, Neuchatel, Interlaken and the spectacular Lauterbrunnen!



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Unfortunately, because of the lockdown, due to the Corona-virus a skiing day organized by the Schulter und Ellbogen Zentrum and the operation room staff and some trips to Lausanne and Basel were cancelled. Furthermore, I am going to miss my bike riding along the river Aare since Bern is a very bike friendly city.

4. Technical skills that I learnt during the fellowship

During my fellowship and because of the great number of operations I was exposed to I acquired many technical skills concerning to operations like the following:

- Reverse total shoulder arthroplasty (primary and revision)
- Anatomic total shoulder arthroplasty (primary and revision)
- Shoulder hemiarthroplasty
- Shoulder and elbow arthroscopy
- Repair of rotator cuff lesion
- Repair of labral tear
- Modified Weaver – Dunn technique
- Reconstruction of the glenoid with iliac crest bone graft
- ORIF of clavicle fracture (fx), glenoid fx, scapula fx, humeral head fx, os acromiale, periprosthetic fx, humeral shaft fx, fx around the elbow, fx of the forearm
- Total elbow arthroplasty
- Reconstruction of the MCL of the elbow with autograft
- Soft tissue operations for lateral epicondylitis, PIN or ulnar nerve entrapment, distal biceps tendon rupture

5. Theoretical knowledge that I learnt during the fellowship

I consider Prof. Hertel a charismatic "teacher" as far as knowledge grafting is concerned. He has a unique way to make you comprehend the anatomy and the biomechanics. Hence, besides the technical skills I learnt much theoretical knowledge such as:

- The importance of the mid-range stability of the shoulder
- Comprehension of the "surgical" shoulder anatomy
- Shoulder ultrasound sonography interpretation
- Shoulder MRI interpretation
- Pre-operative planning of TSA using patient-matched technology
- The importance of using as less material as necessary in order to provide stability during an ORIF

6. New knowledge and skills that I can implement in my own practice

After my fellowship I feel confident to implement all the new knowledge and skills I've been taught during these seven months like tips and tricks for glenoid exposure during TSA, reduction techniques for fractures and especially for humeral head fractures, the basic principles for a successful TSA, the use of templating software for TSA and of course tips for shoulder MRI and U/S interpretation.

7. Overall reflective statement over how the fellowship contributed to my professional development

During this seven month fellowship I had the opportunity to enrich my knowledge and experience in shoulder and elbow surgery. Despite the lockdown, because of the Corona-virus, I was exposed to a great amount of operations. The most impressive thing is that every single day was precious to my fellowship. I strongly believe that this period is going to be a beacon of my professional development.



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8. What are you future plans?

One of my future plans is to continue the “construction of knowledge and experience” of which the foundations were laid during this amazing journey next to Prof. Dr. med. Ralph Hertel. Using everything he taught me as weapons in my quiver I hope that I will be able to help the patients to retrieve the quality of their lives.

Acknowledgements

I have no words to express my gratitude to EFORT Foundation and to Prof. Hertel. Last but not least, I would like to thank MEDACTA from the bottom of my heart which supported financially this great and memorable journey.