

Report for the 2007 SSAT Traveling Fellowship for Surgeons in Academic Practice

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Fellowship Period: January 26 to February 9, 2008

Preceptors:

- 1) Rene Adam, MD, Professor, Hospital Paul Brousse, Centre Hepato-Biliaire, Villejuif, France.
- 2) Jacques Belghiti, Professor, Hospital Beaujon, Department of Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary and Liver transplantation, Clichy, France.

Associated Meeting: 19th International Congress on Anti Cancer Treatment

The fellowship was divided into two one week periods. The first week was spent at the Hospital Paul Brousse under the preceptorship of Dr. Adam. The timing of my visit was particularly fortuitous as Paul Brousse was hosting a special European University Diploma on Hepatic-Pancreatic and Biliary Cancers. The week that I visited, the focus of the module was Liver Metastases from Colorectal Cancer. As such, over the course of the week I was able to attend various portions of the course and interact with many of the leaders in the field of colorectal liver metastases from across Europe. It was incredibly enriching to be able to interact and dialogue with such experts as Professors Capussotti, Elias, De Gramont, Mentha, among others. Discussion regarding the management of colorectal metastases included topics such as new prognostic markers, improvements in diagnosis, and therapeutic imaging with both pre-operative imaging and intra-operative ultrasound. The topic of chemotherapy was also much

discussed. Given Paul Brousse's strong tradition in providing evidence-based data on this topic, there was much discussion on chemotherapy, including the role of chrono-modulated therapy and the potential effect of chemotherapy on the liver. In addition, there were spirited discussions about the timing of chemotherapy (true neo-adjuvant, preoperative downstaging, adjuvant) in treating colorectal metastases, especially in light of the newly published EORTC data. As part of the European University Diploma on Hepatic-Pancreatic and Biliary Cancers I was also fortunate enough to be invited to present some of our own research. Specifically, I gave two talks. In the first presentation, I discussed our data on resection of colorectal liver metastases: implications of surgical margin width. In the second talk, I discussed the Johns Hopkins experience with resection versus radiofrequency ablation for colorectal liver metastases. Both presentations were well received and cultivated a great exchange of ideas on these topics.

During the week, Dr. Adam also presented his pioneering work using the LiverMetSurvey. The LiverMetSurvey is an international registry of patients operated for colorectal metastases. Having the opportunity to discuss with Dr. Adam and his research colleagues how the LiverMetSurvey database was collected, organized, analyzed and managed was particularly helpful from a clinical research career development perspective. Another benefit of my time at Paul Brousse and my attendance at the European University Diploma on Hepatic-Pancreatic and Biliary Cancers was my ability to meet other junior faculty members around Europe that have a dedicated interest in HPB malignancies. In fact, one friendship forged over the course of the week with members of the Lisbon, Portugal HPB team has already led to a clinical research collaboration, which is being presented as part of this year's SSAT plenary session. In addition, I have been invited to return to other European centers in the upcoming

year to continue our exchange of ideas. The experience of the SSAT fellowship has hopefully laid a lifelong foundation for these friendships and research collaborations.

During my time at Paul Brousse, I also had an opportunity to observe a number of cases in the operating room. Specifically, I was able to observe several liver resections and transplantations. I particularly enjoyed my time in the operating room with Professor Azoulay. Professor Azoulay is an outstanding technical surgeon who was gracious in his demonstration of various techniques and operative approaches. Among other cases, I witnessed an extended left hepatectomy. Watching Professor Azoulay obtain extrahepatic control of the middle and left hepatic vein trunk as well as his elegant portal dissection was very beneficial. Professor Azoulay took the time to point out several technical “pearls,” which I think will undoubtedly help me in the future.

Having completed my week at Paul Brousse, I packed my bags and headed to the north side of Paris to visit Professor Jacques Belghiti and his team at Hospital Beaujon. Professor Belghiti was amazingly and wonderfully gracious to me as he allowed me to “shadow” him over the course of the week. During my time at Hospital Beaujon, I attended tumor boards, morning rounds, as well as several distinguished lectures. At Hospital Beaujon, I was also asked to give two presentations. As such, I presented our previous work on the implications of hepatocellular preoperative core biopsy on transplantation eligibility, as well as our data on neoadjuvant chemotherapy: effects on hepatopathology and outcomes following resection of colorectal liver metastases. Again, these presentations served as a great platform for discussion and an exchange of ideas.

During my time at Hospital Beaujon, it was particularly helpful and insightful to witness the presentation of the complex HPB cases that are routinely seen by the Hospital Beaujon team. Interacting with Professor Belghiti, as well as others such as Professor Farges, was intellectually stimulating and provided great insight into how to manage patients with advanced HPB malignancies. The daily presentation of cases and the personal time that Professor Belghiti spent with me rounding on his patients and discussing the subtle, but important, details of how to care for these patients was invaluable.

Probably some of my most valuable memories and experiences at Hospital Beaujon were in the operating room. Professor Belghiti and his team of liver surgeons are incredibly technically adept. Over the course of the week, I saw multiple liver and pancreatic resections. Watching how Professor Belghiti and his team dissected out the portal area, transected the liver, and dealt with segmental liver anatomy was extremely helpful. It was particularly interesting and helpful to watch Professor Belghiti perform the “hanging maneuver” technique, which he himself has popularized and for which he is known world-wide.

At the end of my second week, I then attended the 19th International Congress on Anti Cancer Treatment at the Palais des Congres in Paris. The International Congress on Anti Cancer Treatment was attended by leading scientists and clinicians from around the world who gave educational lectures, as well as presented emerging clinical research. At the meeting I attended a very informative session given by Professor Henri Bismuth on the management of colorectal metastasis of the liver. In addition, in anticipation of my visit to Paris, I had submitted an abstract for consideration. In turn, I was fortunate enough to present the contents of the work as

part of one of the scientific sessions. The meeting provided the perfect final destination for my two week fellowship in Paris.

In addition to the intellectual, scientific, and career development aspects of my trip, the friendships and quality personal time that I was fortunate to share will be some of my most lasting memories. Both Professor Adam and Professor Belghiti were exceptionally kind and gracious in the exceptional hospitality that they extended to me. I enjoyed the conversations we had over dinner and their willingness to spend time with me outside of the operating room. One particular highlight of the trip was the time I spent at Professor Farges' home for dinner with his wife and family. The conversation and warmth of their hospitality was much appreciated.

No trip to France would have been complete without some time experiencing the great food, culture, and history of the country. During my time in Paris, I spent nights touring the city and visiting many of the landmark Parisian sites. The only bad memory I will take from my time in Paris will be the watching of my beloved New England Patriots on satellite TV lose the Super Bowl to the New York Giants. Despite this pain that lingers, I would consider my trip to Paris and my SSAT travelling fellowship an outstanding and unmitigated success. I thank the SSAT for having provided me with this wonderful opportunity.