

Report for the 2008 Traveling Fellowship for Surgeons within the U.S. or Canada



Elijah Dixon MD

Fellowship Period:

**September 29 – October 3, 2008. Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.
April 13 – April 17, 2009. MD Anderson Cancer Center.**

Hosts/Sponsors:

**Professor W. Jarnagin, MSKCC. NY, NY.
Professor N. Vauthey, MDACC. Houston, TX.**

I feel extremely fortunate to have been awarded this fellowship by the SSAT. It allowed me to visit two of the leading cancer centers in the world. I divided my fellowship time (2 weeks) between MSKCC and MDACC. My primary focus on these trips was hepatic surgical oncology. I also spent time interacting with and gaining exposure to the pancreatic teams at both sites. My goals were enrichment in three areas – scientific/research, clinical/operative care, and career development. I met and in fact surpassed all three of these goals.

My first week was spent in Manhattan in the fall of 2008. Dr Jarnagin was a great host and went out of his way to welcome me and my wife Jocelyn. My week was packed full of great experiences, including opportunities to attend HPB multidisciplinary tumour boards, ward rounds, the operating theatre, and meetings with all of the HPB team. The team members I was able to spend time with include Dr. W. Jarnagin, Dr. M. D'Angelica, Dr. P. Allen, Dr. M. Brennan, Dr. L. Blumgart, Dr. Y. Fong, Dr. Schattner, and Dr. O'Reilly. In addition to these individual meetings, Dr. Jarnagin, D'Angelica, and Allen took me and Jocelyn out for a wonderful dinner on the Tuesday evening of our visit. Dr. Jarnagin also arranged a dinner on the Thursday evening with me and the

surgical oncology fellows – this was one of the highlights of the trip! I really enjoyed discussing past experiences and future goals with this group, their energy and enthusiasm was infectious. Some of the other highlights of the trip included watching Dr. Jarnagin perform a bloodless laparoscopic liver resection of segments 5 and 6 for metastatic colorectal cancer, Dr. Fong's segment 4b/5 liver resection and common duct excision for gallbladder cancer, and Dr. Allen's facile use of the Ligasure while performing a pancreaticoduodenectomy. Discussing the history of HPB surgery with Dr. Blumgart was a once in a lifetime opportunity! I was able to get great career advice in my meeting with Dr. Brennan. I had the opportunity to present some of my research on health technology assessment in surgery at Grand Rounds; this led to some enlightening discussions with the group. The trip also formed the foundation for some new friendships which I believe will foster future collaborations. My wife Jocelyn and I took advantage of the trip to also enjoy many of the great cultural experiences available in NY including trips to museums, art galleries, fine dining, and a Broadway show! I would also like to thank Dr. Shishir Maithel (surgical oncology fellow) and Sharon Martin (Dr. Jarnagin's administrative assistant) for all their help and hospitality during my visit.



Dr.'s Maithel, Jarnagin, Dixon, Allen

During my second week I visited MDACC. Professor Vauthey really put together a great week for me! I was able to meet with the members of the liver and pancreas teams, as well as many of the senior surgical leaders at MDACC to obtain valuable career advice. I met with Dr. R. Pollock, E. Abdalla, S. Curley, J. Lee, D. Madoff, G. Walsh, G. Varadhachary, E. Loyer, and J. Fleming. I attended multidisciplinary Liver Tumour Conference and Pancreatic Tumour Conference. I was able to observe Dr. Vauthey perform an extended right hepatectomy/biliary tree resection with sleeve resection of the portal vein bifurcation for hilar cholangiocarcinoma and Dr. Abdalla perform both a right hepatectomy for metastatic colorectal carcinoma and a segment 4b/5 liver resection with portal lymph node dissection for gallbladder cancer. The combined use of the CUSA with the Floating Ball by the team at MDACC was impressive, with virtually no blood loss during these hepatic resections. As well, observing the precise extrahepatic dissection of the portal structures in conjunction with the ‘hanging manoeuvre’ in preparation for liver resection was very educational. Discussing the finer points of peri-operative neo- and adjuvant chemotherapy for metastatic colorectal cancer was enlightening. I learned about novel ways to assess the radiologic response to systemic therapy and its correlation with pathologic response, downstaging of unresectable MCRC disease to resectable, and Dr. Vauthey’s novel incision for right upper quadrant surgery (which I have already implemented in my practice!). I had the great opportunity to present at Grand Surgical Oncology Rounds – this led to some very good discussion around quality indicators and differences between the Canadian and US health care systems. Dr. Vauthey also organized rounds for me and Dr. Sang Geol Kim (visiting from S. Korea) where clinical and research fellows presented interesting cases and new research – this was very educational and stimulated some great discussion around the cases presented. Special thanks to Ruth Haynes (administrative assistant to Dr. Vauthey), Dr. Abdalla, and Dr. Vauthey for all the planning and hospitality that went into my visit!

In summary, my fellowship was a once in a lifetime experience. I was able to accomplish all the goals I had set out for the trips. I want to thank the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract for the support which made this fellowship a reality, Jon Blackstone for his help and guidance arranging the fellowship, my partners Francis Sutherland and

Oliver Bathe for covering me during my absence, and Professors Jarnagin and Vauthey for all the planning and great hospitality that went into my visits!



Dr.'s Vauthey, Dixon, and Abdalla.