

## **SSAT Traveling Fellowship 2003-2004**

My second visit of the SSAT traveling fellowship was at the University of Miami, under the supervision of Dr. Robert Bailey. Though Dr. Bailey is primarily a laparoscopic surgeon, he made sure that I was exposed to a wide variety of surgery, open and laparoscopic, and especially to their teaching program. University of Miami has a large residency, with six chief residents each year. They have a very active hepatobiliary service under Dr. Levi as well as multiple transplant services, a bariatrics surgery service, trauma, and general surgery.

On my first day at the University, I was privileged to attend their hepatobiliary conferences and their GI conference. These were resident-presented cases of interesting work-ups, complete with photographs and inter-operative pictures. It was gratifying to see the active participation of a good number of attending staff. The discussion was lively and much was expected of the residents. These conferences lasted the better part of the morning, several hours. The rest of the day was spent in the operating room, observing cases. I was openly welcomed and was able to observe and carry on a discussion with one of their busier hepatobiliary surgeons, Dr. Levi.

The second day was Grand Rounds, where an impressive summary was shown regarding their pediatric intestinal and liver transplant experience. Their experience was extensive, over a ten-year period.

I spent an entire afternoon working in the training laboratory. This was a fascinating lab with a full size mannequin for training on colonoscopies and upper endoscopies. A computer model accurately simulated the inside of a colon, complete with polyps or other lesions. It also simulated the "loop intensity" and the pain threshold of the patient. One could select training "games" or actual patients and perform the colonoscopy and/or procedure with great life-like accuracy. The laparoscopic training modules were very realistic. One used ports and laparoscopic equipment to perform tasks simulated on the computer. One could practice suturing, cutting, tying knots, and dissection on relatively life-like tissues. The computer trainer timed the events, measured accuracy, tension, torque, path to target and angles to target, success, etc. One was graded on a pass/fail score at the end of the task and could review his/her areas of weaknesses. This training module has great implications for both training our residents as well as assessing the competency of new attending staff. The training of residents in programs where exposure to advanced laparoscopy skills might be lacking would greatly improve the quality of the residents upon graduation.

Overall, my experience at University of Miami was an excellent one. They have a very large residency, research and publish regularly, and were willing to share their teaching skills with this visiting fellow. I was able to bring to my program many ideas about structuring conferences and training our residents in open and laparoscopic surgery.

My visits to both Massachusetts General Hospital and to University of Miami were of the highest caliber and great experiences. I was able to see different ideas in education and research as well as make new contacts with two different academic settings. I am grateful to the SSAT for the opportunity to pursue these opportunities.

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