

International Oncoplasty Fellowship in the United Kingdom

I am currently pursuing an International Fellowship in Oncoplasty at University Hospitals of North Midlands, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom for the last 9 months. I have done my prior training in Surgical Oncology from Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, India. The concept of an oncoplastic breast surgeon is relatively new in India with very few breast surgeons practicing oncoplastic techniques. Thus, an International fellowship in oncoplasty has a lot to offer. The one-year program is ideal to guide candidates through the concept and training of oncoplasty, especially for those surgeons having a basic training in breast surgery or surgical oncology.

I have learnt the surgical techniques of skin-sparing and nipple-sparing mastectomy, implant-based whole breast reconstructions, autologous partial breast reconstructions using perforator flaps, reduction mammoplasty, lipomodelling, nipple reconstruction and tattooing; something which is beyond cancer treatment but equally important. Also, a good hands on experience with breast conserving surgery, wire-guided breast conservation surgery and sentinel node biopsy, which is relatively less common in India. Various reconstructive options to be considered for each patient and treatment planning are taught as well. The tumor board meetings have provided an excellent opportunity to keep up with the current evidence in breast cancer and decision-making. As an oncoplastic fellow, I am in charge of oncoplastic tumor board meetings conducted every fortnight. Oncoplastic breast surgeons and plastic surgeons attend these jointly.

The fellowship has a good scope for clinical research and audits. I have been involved in service evaluation audits, retrospective and prospective clinical studies and teaching of surgical trainees and medical students. This has benefited me in the form of presentations at national and international meetings and research publications. A comfortable work atmosphere, intense high volume elective work with no on-call commitments and two sessions a week dedicated for research, helps me do justice

to my work. Managing clinics is probably something one does not look forward to but has a good role to play in developing communication skills and patient counseling, things that benefit in the long-term. It is also a good time to take Royal College examinations, attend surgical workshops and develop a professional network. I have completed my MRCS during the fellowship; there is an opportunity to apply for MS oncoplastic course.

To conclude, there is a lot to learn and take back home. I will be able to provide options of partial and immediate breast reconstruction to breast cancer patients when indicated, a huge psychological benefit as compared to a mastectomy. Autologous reconstructions would be a big advantage considering the cost of implant-based reconstructions and financial constraints of most patients in India. I also look forward to train general and breast surgeons from India in oncoplastic techniques, in collaboration with my colleagues in the United Kingdom.

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