

KENYA BELIEVE IT? A HIGHLY-SUSPENDED EXPERIENCE DOWN UNDER

Few experiences in my life have stuck in my mind like the journey I had down under with Dr. Anna Rosamilia at the Pelvic Floor unit at Monash Health. As a generalist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology working in Kenya, I have seen my fair share of fistula. However, nothing had prepared me for the wide world of urogynaecology I was to experience in Melbourne. Sure, I have read the books and assisted in some pelvic floor surgery at home, but this is just the tip of the beautiful iceberg that is the practice of urogynaecology.

Christmas came early for me when IUGA offered me a fully sponsored observership under Dr. Anna Rosamilia at Monash Health pelvic floor unit. The observership was meant to be over a period of four weeks taking in the different aspects of urogynaecology. I was well received in Melbourne after a long trip from Nairobi. Dr. Anna made sure that I settled in well and I hit the ground running.

Every Monday morning was spent at the Urodynamics clinic which was run by the urogynaecology fellow, Dr. Jerome Melon and the clinic nurse Alison. The two made a great team and made sure I was not left out during each study, patiently explaining the results to me. Every patient was prepared and counselled before having the procedure. I got to experience for the first time how urodynamic studies are carried out and interpreted. The patients would then get a patient information leaflet from the IUGA website to take home and read.



With Dr. Jerome at Monash Health Moorabbin hospital

Tuesdays were spent at the Monash Health Moorabbin Pelvic floor clinic in the morning. At the Pelvic Floor Clinic, I shadowed Dr. Anna. Most patients presented with pelvic floor prolapse requiring surgical intervention. The clinic would run until 12pm, after which we would go for a clinical meeting to discuss the surgical cases booked for the afternoon session. Theatre cases would start promptly at 1:00pm. I got to observe Dr. Anna and other consultants from the unit including Dr. Lin Li Ow and Dr. Fay Chao. I got to observe cases such as uterosacral ligament suspension, Burch colposuspension, mid urethral slings, vaginal sacrospinous suspensions, anterior and posterior wall repairs and vaginal hysterectomies. I

also got to observe sacrocolpopexy performed laparoscopically. The theatres were run professionally and efficiently with the surgery performed by the fellows together with the consultants.



Dr. Julie, Dr. Jerome, myself and Dr. Anna at the end of a long day in theatre

The rest of the week was spent in different hospitals depending on where Dr. Anna had surgical cases or consulting. I got to experience first-hand the workings of different hospitals in Melbourne. The staff in the different hospitals were always friendly and welcoming. Dr. Anna also organized a day for me to visit Mercy Hospital for Women, a specialist public hospital for women. I got to observe pelvic floor surgery by the Mercy urogynaecology team led by Professor Peter Dwyer who has developed the extraperitoneal uterosacral ligament vaginal vault suspension.

During the third week of my observership, the Urogynaecological Society of Australasia (UGSA) was holding its annual scientific and general meeting. Dr. Anna Rosamilia was kind enough to pay for and facilitate my attendance. We started off by attending a symposium on Pelvic Pain that had a multi-disciplinary team involving Urologists, Urogynaecologists, Physiotherapists, Gynaecologists and most importantly, a patient with a chronic history of pelvic pain. This symposium was an eye opener with contributions from all involved in the management of pelvic pain. The next day, I attended a hands-on laparoscopic suturing lab organized by Professor Chris Maher after watching live laparoscopic and robotic surgery. I also got to try my hand at simulated robotic surgery in the dry lab, a very exciting moment in my life. The techniques were taught by different laparoscopic surgeons ensuring that we got different tricks and techniques. The UGSA scientific meeting was held at The Crown Promenade and featured many speakers of note such as Douglas Hale, Pat Culligan Karen Noblett and Ari Winkler. There was a robust debate on the role of guidelines in urogynaecology that left the delegates informed and entertained.

To crown my urogynaecological experience, I got to observe Dr. Anna performing robotic sacrocolpopexy on a patient during my fourth week. This was another first for me, and I spent the day wide eyed!



Standing next to a Robotic machine with Dr. Nisha, Dr. LinLi and Dr. Anna

It was not all pelvic floor and robotics during my stay. I got to tour many places in Melbourne and enjoyed taking the train to work every morning as this allowed me to soak in the local culture. Dr. Anna had organized accommodation for me, and my host, Janice, would take time off from work to take me around to see the sights. I got to see wildlife I had never seen before such as the kangaroo, wombat, wallaby and koala bear. The city of Melbourne was full of surprises and is rich in culture. I toured the city on foot and took the tram. I got to see the Melbourne Museum and took in lots on the culture of the city and its people. I got to watch a Broadway musical at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne.



Feeding a wallaby!

On my last evening in Melbourne, Dr. Anna hosted the urogynaecology fellows and myself to a sumptuous dinner at a lovely Italian restaurant. We had a great time as we all got to know each other better.



Dinner with the team.

My special thanks to the great team at Monash health Pelvic Floor Unit. I am forever grateful for this great opportunity that the International Urogynaecological Association has given me. From this experience, my interest in Urogynaecology has increased exponentially, and I look forward to getting a fellowship soon.



Warm day spent touring Melbourne