

Dr. Merry Gong

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Hosted by Ms. Rane Thakar and Mr. Abdul Sultan at Croydon University Hospital, London, UK

May 27 to June 22, 2019

Dear IUGA Education Committee,

I am honoured and grateful to be a recipient of 2019 IUGA Observership Grant. The award provided me the valuable opportunity to work with Ms. Thakar and Mr. Sultan to gain the knowledge and skills I need to create the first multidisciplinary perineal clinic specializing in the management of obstetrical perineum trauma in British Columbia. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report in 2017, Canada has one of the highest rates of perineal trauma from vaginal delivery when compared to the rest of the world. This signifies the urgent need for skilled care providers and evidence-based follow-up programs to help women recover from their injuries. Postpartum clinics for women with pelvic trauma have been successfully established in the United Kingdom. These clinics are staffed by a collaborative team of health care providers and equipped to perform anal manometry and endoanal ultrasound, allowing women to receive comprehensive physiological and psychological support within one facility. Unfortunately, no such clinics currently exist in my province.

In order to establish the new clinic, I will need to create standardized management protocols. My observership in Croydon University Hospital's Urogynecology and Pelvic Floor Reconstruction Unit (UPFRU) has helped me to achieve this goal. As one of the first dedicated postpartum perineal clinics in the world, UPFRU has pioneered and developed well established protocols for triaging, diagnosing, and managing patients with obstetrical pelvic floor dysfunction. During my observership, I was able to witness the entire process from referral, triage, initial consultation, follow-up to discharge from the clinic. I was introduced to management protocols for various pelvic floor conditions including obstetrical anal sphincter injuries, perineal pain, and incontinence. My goal is to develop comparable protocols for clinics in Canada.

Ms. Thakar and Mr. Sultan are internationally renowned for their expertise, research, and training programs in pelvic floor and anorectal ultrasound. During my observership in Croydon, I was able to attend weekly perineal clinics during which women with obstetrical anal sphincter injuries and mesh-related complications were evaluated using ultrasound. The Urogynecology consultants and fellows were wonderful teachers who taught me techniques in performing and interpreting ultrasound. I also learned various treatment options for different symptomatology and ultrasound findings. I further enhanced my ultrasound skills by attending their annual Pelvic Floor and Anorectal Ultrasound Masterclass - a two-day hands-on workshop that

provides training on how to perform and interpret endoanal ultrasounds. Given that my home province only has one radiologist who can perform this procedure, my ability to also offer this exam will significantly reduce wait time and improve women's access to this important diagnostic tool.

In the operating theater, I observed intravesical botox injections, removal of vaginal cysts, anterior and posterior repairs, sacrospinous ligament fixation, hysteropexy and implantation of sacral neuromodulation systems. The latter two procedures were particularly fascinating because they are not commonly offered in my training center. My exposure to these procedures expanded my knowledge of surgical techniques and their clinical indications.

Another highlight of this observership was working with the friendly and knowledgeable nurses at the UPFRU. By rotating through the nurse-led incontinence clinics, urodynamics clinics and wound clinics, I learned conservative management of fecal incontinence, interpretation of urodynamics, and treatment of perineal wounds. I was very excited to see that the nurses also administered tibial nerve stimulation therapy, a treatment that is not currently offered in my province. Seeing my enthusiasm in learning this therapy, the nurses not only taught me the techniques but also allowed me to try tibial nerve stimulation on myself and staff volunteers. I am very grateful for this new skill, and I plan to make this service available to my future patients.

In summary, the IUGA Observership Grant provided me with needed funding to complete my 4-week observership at the UPFRU and gain the crucial knowledge and skills to develop the first multidisciplinary obstetric perineal clinic in my province. I deeply appreciate the staff at the UPFRU for their warm hospitality and enthusiasm in teaching. They made this observership a truly unforgettable experience. Thank you all for supporting my aspirations and plans for positively impacting women's health in Canada.



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Having a great time at the Pelvic Floor and Anorectal Ultrasound Masterclass with Mr. Sultan and Ms. Thakar.

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Hanging out with the fun urogynecology fellows at the Orchid Suite.

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Dining out with the entire urogyne group.  
Delicious food and even better company.

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