

**Martin Luther university visit report, Germany**

We started our journey on a gloomy Saturday evening. We were a little anxious as either of us (me & my colleague Dr Biruck) have never been to Europe before. We were especially worried about the extra “attention” we expected to get after the new Ebola outbreak in Africa. But we were happy to find the trip to Frankfurt more or less uneventful. After arriving in Frankfurt on Sunday, we bought our train tickets stayed and looked around Frankfurt till the departure time (for 06 hours). After a long train ride, we arrived at our destination at Halle Saale Germany on Sunday 10:00 pm.

At Saale, we were greeted with the enthusiastic face of Dr Eva Kantelhardt (a gynecologist, who made the trip possible). She took us to the guest house where we stayed for the remainder of the week.

The next day at 06:30am, we left the house and headed to the hospital with doctor kantelhardt showing us the ins and outs of the city along the way. In spite of what we initially thought, we were assigned to two different hospitals. Mine was the furthest, in the outskirts of town but was also the biggest in the district.

**Monday**

I had a mini tour of the obs/gyn department of the hospital. The hospital was the biggest I have seen so far. If it wasn't for the white coated Doctors pacing through the hallway, one could easily mistaken it for a luxurious apartment hotel. The café's in the hospital might add to that confusion. Anyways after a brief tour of the department, we (I and Dr kantelhardt), headed to the morning room. I was introduced formally to the department staff and residents, and then it was business as usual. They talked of the cases in German language which was difficult for me to understand. But Dr Eva who was sitting next to me was translating from time to time. I noticed there were more gynecology cases being discussed than obstetrics, which was probably because German woman generally don't want to conceive.

After the morning session, we directly headed to the OR. To my surprise, the OR has more than 15 rooms each having two tables. Our table was in room

13. I assisted in two major operations that day. One was sacrospinous ligament suspension with a four arm mesh and the other was vaginal hysterectomy for atypical complex endometrial hyperplasia. I did both surgeries with the hospital uro-gynecologist Dr Goble. He was very eager to show me his technique of surgery. I was also fascinated by their organized OR work. Everyone: the assistant nurse, the OR nurse, the scrub nurse, the anesthesists were all very coordinated and the surgeries throughout my stay went flawlessly.



## **TUESDAY**

I made rounds with Dr Eva at the gynecology ward which starts early at 12'30 am. After the rounds, I finished the morning and headed to the OR. That day, I assisted Professor Christoph Thomssen (who was the department head and rated one of the best 100 Drs in Germany) in doing total abdominal hysterectomy with bilateral salpingoopherctomy, infra gastric omentectomy, with lymph node dissection up to the level of the para-aortic. The surgery took around 04 hours, during which time a urologist was also consulted for a big renal cyst.

During the afternoon, we went to Leipzig with Dr Debru, who was instrumental in arranging this experience sharing. We discussed about our and his expectation from this trip and watched videos of major gynecologic operations. He was also kind enough to provide us with the learning materials, which we will share with our colleagues.

### **Wednesday**

Apart from the morning round and morning session, I also joined Prof Thomssen for mastectomy. I was surprised to know that breast surgeries are handled by gynecologists in Germany. I also assisted Dr Goble, the urogynecologist, for another mesh sacrospinous suspension and laparoscopically assisted vaginal hysterectomy.

In the afternoon, I joined one of the residents in the labor ward. There were actually no clients that day but I got a grand tour of the labor and delivery unit with the adjacent NICU.



### **Thursday**

I met with the hospital's endocrinology and infertility expert. I also assisted her in doing myomectomy and observed as she did diagnostic laparoscopy for endometriosis.

I also saw Prof Tchirikov (renowned perinatologist doing fetoscopic laser ablation surgery for twin to twin transfusion syndrome, an experimental procedure).

In the afternoon, I joined another perinatologist for obstetric ultrasound, which we did for four clients. He did a detailed anatomic scan for each which made it a great teaching opportunity.

## Friday

After the morning routine of rounds and morning session, I joined the infertility specialist and her andrology colleague in infertility and andrology unit. There I was given an interactive lecture about male factor infertility and saw few patients in the clinic.

I later on headed for the wards with one of the residents and appreciated their pre and post op care. I was amazed to see every little detail was discussed with the patient, with every angle of interpretation thought of.

### Summary of experience gained

1. I assisted around 10 major operations, increasing my skill set
2. After the trip, I am now quite comfortable in doing transvaginal ultrasonography and thus included it in my routine
3. I have understood the importance of team work and coordination
4. I am highly motivated to better our medical practice

### Challenges

1. Language barrier
2. Duration of stay



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