

Scottish Haematology Society Report, 2019

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Home Institution: University of Aberdeen

Host Institution: National University of Singapore

I was awarded the Scottish Haematology Society's elective grant in 2019, to undertake a clinical elective at the Department of Haematology-Oncology at the National University Hospital (NUH), in association with the National University of Singapore, and to undertake a clinical research project with their Haematopoietic Cell Transplant (HCT) team. My attachment was focused on furthering my knowledge and abilities within the medical field of Haematology, as well as undertaking and leading a clinical research project.

Daily, from 0800 to 1030, I joined the HCT team during their ward rounds. The team - lead by Senior Consultants Tan Lip Kun, Koh Liang Piu and Michelle Poon - manage a daily caseload of twenty inpatients receiving complex HCT and other cell therapy procedures. Rounds were an excellent opportunity for me to further my knowledge in a very specialised and fascinating niche within haematology, and the consultants were all generous in their delivery of excellent and high-quality teaching.

Thereafter, I joined various morning clinics led by other consultants. Clinics varied according to the day of the week: On Mondays, I joined the lymphoma clinic where consultants assess and manage a large cohort of highly heterogeneous patients. Tuesdays belonged to the HCT clinic, where doctors spend their time preparing and counselling patients ahead of the HCT process, whilst also undertaking the extensive and protracted long-term care for HCT patients, which spans many years after the initial transplant. This was an excellent opportunity for me to gain significant exposure to the management of chronic Graft vs Host Disease, as well as the other long-term immunological sequelae of HCT.

On Wednesdays and Fridays I attended individual consultant clinics, where consultants tend to the patients for whom they are the primary physician. I attended many informative clinics with a range of expert clinicians, and saw a broad range of cases. On Thursday mornings, I instructed local polytechnic students - interning as Clinical Research Coordinators in the department - on the immunological aspects of haematological disease and treatment, with particular attention on HCT immunology. Meanwhile, afternoons were populated with MDT meetings, journal clubs, research group meetings, lectures and other teaching. Of note, I was



The National University Cancer Institute, which houses NUH's Haemato-Oncology Department, in addition to their Radiology-Oncology and Surgical-Oncology Departments



Selected members of the NUH HCT Team – From left to right, Sister Belinda, Dr Koh Liang Piu, Sister Yelly, and Dr Tan Lip Kun

warmly welcomed into the Immunocompromised Team, within the NUH Division of Infectious Diseases, for a week. During this week, I learned more about the management of infections in immunocompromised patients. In particular, I learnt a great deal about the importance of maintaining clear-minded clinical judgement, and maintaining the rational prescribing of antimicrobial agents, in patients for whom clinical examination and investigation are not as immediately revealing, when compared to their immunocompetent counterparts.

In my remaining time, under the direction of the HCT physicians, I completed a clinical research project, comparing the infectious complications of two HCT platforms, which has since been submitted for consideration as an abstract to the European Bone Marrow Transplant Annual Meeting. I was also fortunate to attend a celebratory soiree organised by the Bone Marrow Donor Programme, a Singaporean charity dedicated to encouraging and enabling citizens to become bone marrow donors. Furthermore, I was able to attend a 3-day local cell therapy conference, with CAR-T therapy pioneer Dr Bruce Levine (of the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine) in attendance as the keynote speaker.



A panel of experts at the "Frontiers in Cell Therapy" Joint Symposium, jointly hosted by the Stem Cell Society, Singapore, and the International Society of Cell & Gene Therapy

Overall, this elective attachment has had a significant impact on my career, and has informed me greatly about the clinical practice of haematology, clinical research within the field of haematology. In particular, this attachment has given me a strong and long-sighted view towards the skills and knowledge that will be of vital importance to the haematologists and transplant physicians of tomorrow, as they begin the difficult task of ushering in a new generation of genetically modified, cell-based interventional procedures. Therefore, the kind and generous assistance provided to me by the Scottish Haematology Society has been invaluable, and I wish to extend to them my deepest thanks and appreciation.