

**The Ronald Raven Travelling Scholarship
Declan Dunne**

**Visit to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre, Manhattan, New York City
July-August 2012**

My fellowship supported by BASO has provided me with the opportunity to observe the training and practice of surgical oncology in one of the worlds most prestigious cancer centres, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre (MSKCC). With its main surgical hospital situated in the Upper East side of Manhattan, my visit and fellowship promised to be impressive and did not disappoint.

MSKCC has a worldwide reputation, both as a hospital providing exemplary care and as a research institution. A quick search of Pubmed identifies nearly 18,000 publications from their institution. The success of both their laboratory and clinical research can largely be attributed to their devotion to data collection. One of the drivers of this passion for data collection was Dr Murray Brennan who was chief of surgery from 1985 till 2006. His passion has developed into institutional culture, and this reservoir of clinical data helps fuel both their clinical research program and their laboratory program. The collection of clinical data for the purposes of research and improving care is now seen within MSKCC as a standard of care.

At MSKCC there is an established multi-disciplinary surgical oncology approach that functions seamlessly. Many of the operations carried out require several surgeons from different specialities. During my time I saw hepatobiliary operations combined with colorectal procedures, thoracic surgery and intra operative oncology treatments. These operations are arranged often at only a few days notice, and are a testament to the nature and functioning of the hospital. Outside of the operating room, weekly MDT's help coordinate surgical interventions with the latest chemotherapeutic strategies to provide the best possible care tailored to each patient.

As there are very few junior doctors working within the surgical units at MSKCC, the oncology fellows provide much of the medical care below the attending (consultant) level. These fellows have completed their surgical residency (five years) and are seeking further training in surgical oncology. The fellowships provide intensive training in all aspects of surgical oncology. A typical working day starts around 6am with rounds. The working day lasts till 6-7pm, though many of the fellows come back after their evening meal to do further rounds around 9pm. The fellows are on call for their own patients every weekday, though as they often only have 6-8 patients this usually means just the occasional call. They also cover alternate weekends, and staff an on call rota for new admissions.

The reward for this intense workload is an exceptionally well-structured training program. There are multiple departmental oncology meetings throughout the week, which vary between each surgical discipline. These meetings often involve a trainee case presentation, with supporting literature review, and open discussion. These discussions often benefit from the experience and knowledge of leading surgical oncologists such as Dr Murray Brennan and Dr Leslie Blumgart. Within the operating room the fellows are asked to perform all the operations with an attending assisting and training. This is the case for all operations from the most basic to the most complex. The theatre staff expect this, so there is never any concern about late finishes due to operations taking longer as a result of training.

This fellowship has changed the way I think about and approach cancer care, and I hope to take much of what I have learned into my future career as a consultant. I am extremely grateful to Professor Graeme Poston, all the surgeons at MSKCC, and BASO for providing me with this opportunity and for supporting me in this experience.

Images Legend

1. Night out with the Fong's. Dr Fong and his wife took my family and I out for a fantastic evening meal. My daughter insisted on bringing a giant duck she found in the Fong's home.

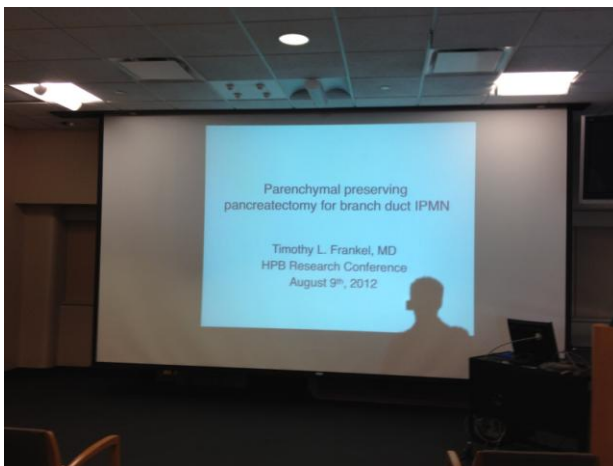
2. Professor Blumgart Teaching. Professor Blumgart still teaches after 60 years in the profession.
3. Oncology Conference. Just one of the many oncology conferences happening throughout the week.
4. Professor Blumgart. Me with professor Blumgart
5. View of Manhattan from Brooklyn. Manhattan is one of the most incredible places I have ever been. Here is the view to the financial district from the other side of the river in Brooklyn.
6. The walk to work.



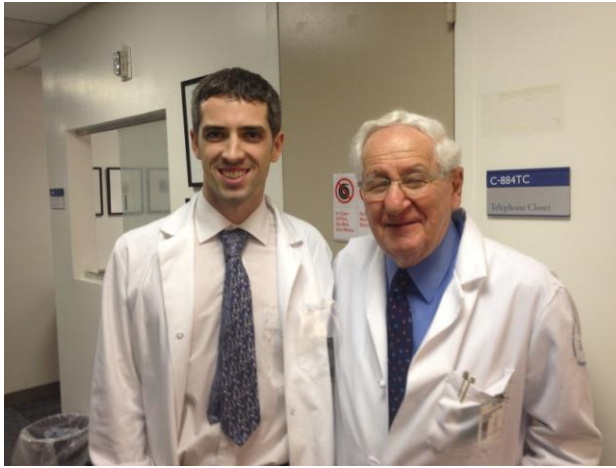
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