

Exploring Dermatology Advancements: A Journey through the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Conference in New Orleans and Mohs Observership at Vancouver General Hospital

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Attending professional conferences and observerships are crucial for expanding knowledge and gaining practical insights in specialised fields. In this essay, I will share my enriching experience at the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Annual Conference in New Orleans and my memorable Mohs observership at Vancouver General Hospital. These experiences provided valuable networking opportunities and deepened my understanding of dermatology advancements, enhancing my passion for this field.

I am grateful to the British Society for Dermatological Surgery (BSDS) for supporting my attendance at both the AAD Annual Conference and the Mohs Observership. The AAD conference is highly encouraged for UK trainees, attracting over 8,000 dermatologists, and offering diverse educational sessions for residents and experienced professionals.

The conference featured presentations by experts from around the world, covering various topics including cutaneous oncology, inflammatory dermatology, dermatopathology, cosmetic dermatology, and dermatological surgery. The Mohs sessions were particularly interesting, discussing novel reconstructive methods and highlighting the pros and cons of different techniques. Many sessions provided practical insights applicable to my own clinical practice, including a practical session on sclerotherapy.

In addition to the educational sessions, the AAD conference offered valuable networking opportunities. I had the privilege of engaging with fellow dermatology professionals and researchers, expanding my professional network and gaining insights from different perspectives. I met renowned dermatologists, engaging in fruitful discussions and learning about their research and clinical practices. Furthermore, I enjoyed networking with UK trainees and exploring the vibrant city of New Orleans, immersing myself in its jazz music and culinary delights.

The second part of my enriching experience was the Mohs observership at Vancouver General Hospital with Dr. Zloty, Dr. Cowan, and Dr. Kossintseva. It provided a unique opportunity to observe the differences and similarities between the UK and Canadian healthcare systems, as well as the functioning of a Mohs unit.

In Vancouver, the Mohs unit is privately owned by clinicians, with each procedure billed individually. The number of Mohs units in Canada is significantly smaller compared to the USA, resulting in longer waiting times for patients. Patients often travel long distances for surgery, and pre-consultations were not always possible due to these waiting times. The day of surgery would often be the patients' first meeting with the Mohs team.

The Mohs team aimed to close or graft all defects, with the advantage of having a plastic surgeon for complex defect repairs and eyelid reconstructions. The workflow was streamlined,

with the fellow taking a brief history and reviewing the patient before starting the procedure, including administering local anaesthesia, and performing cautery. The nursing staff contributed to the efficiency of the system by administering anaesthesia and performing cautery in between cases. Consent was obtained by the nursing staff, and patients remained in the same room while the clinical team moved between rooms, ensuring a swift and streamlined service. Surgery was performed meticulously and to an extremely high standard.

It is noteworthy that the Mohs procedure in Canada was office-based, with the use of non-sterile gloves. This approach appeared to be cost-effective and did not appear to result in an increased risk of infection, aligning with findings in the literature.

Overall, these experiences provided valuable insights into the differences and similarities in clinical practices between the UK and Canada. They highlighted the importance of collaboration and networking for providing advanced and optimal patient care. I express my gratitude to the BSDS and the consultant body at the Department of Dermatology at the Royal Victoria Infirmary for their support in facilitating these experiences.

