

BSDS Travel Fellowship Award 2024

Dr Sumir Chawla

I am very grateful to the British Society for Dermatological Surgery for supporting my attendance at the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Annual Meeting in Orlando from 7-10 March and observership in the Mohs and Dermatologic Surgery Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), in Boston from 10-14 March 2025.

The Orlando meeting was the largest in the Academy's history with over 20,000 delegates and nearly 300 educational sessions. I was able to attend a number of sessions on cutaneous oncology, dermatopathology, and I found the sessions on advanced reconstruction techniques, particularly for nasal and lip defects, especially informative. Sessions covering nail surgery and the prevention of post-operative complications provided practical insights to help improve my current practice. A highlight of the conference was the symposium led by Dr Emily Ruiz on managing high risk cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), which explored novel personalised prognostic scoring systems and the role of neoadjuvant therapies and radiotherapy post-Mohs surgery.

I had the privilege of presenting three research projects at the AAD, including a study evaluating the capabilities of large language models in patient care after skin surgery, and a study exploring patient perception in teledermatology-directed skin surgery (without face-to-face review). The meeting further provided the chance to network with international colleagues, and I was able to meet a number of dermatology residents and attendings over the week, as well as explore Orlando.

Following the meeting, I joined the BWH Mohs and Dermatologic Surgery Center under Dr Emily Ruiz, academic and program director. Over the week I observed nearly seventy Mohs cases and reconstructions of primary and recurrent SCCs, melanomas and basal cell carcinomas. It was an invaluable learning opportunity which helped me gain confidence in identifying histological features of SCCs and melanoma, and the team organised for previous SCC slides to be retrieved for me to read over the course of the week. It was particularly interesting to be involved in the case of a recurrent SCC in the temple undergoing Mohs, and observe the microscopic inflammatory response from the recently initiated cemiplimab. I was able to observe the broad variety of reconstructions used for closures over the week, as well as laser treatment sessions (using CO2 and pulsed dye laser) for postoperative scars, which the BWH offered free for all their Mohs patients. I also attended the weekly tumour board meeting at the Dana-Farber Brigham Cancer Center, where dermatology, plastic surgery, oculoplastics and oncology discussed challenging cases. I was grateful to the team for their dedicated teaching, especially Dr Chrysalyne Schmults, who delivered teaching sessions on suturing technique and flap design for me, with practical video demonstrations.

It was a privilege to be able to attend this landmark meeting and observe Mohs in one of the leading centres in the USA, and I am very grateful to the BSDS for facilitating this opportunity and to my hosts, Dr Emily Ruiz and the entire BWH team, for their support.

