

## **BSDS Travelling Fellowship 2025 Report**

**Dr Chris Lim**

It was an honour and privilege to receive the British Society for Dermatological Surgery (BSDS) travelling fellowship supporting my attendance at the American College of Mohs Surgery Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas. The meeting came at an ideal point in my training, with only three months remaining of my Mohs micrographic surgery fellowship at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle. It provided an invaluable opportunity to consolidate my learning and gain exposure to evolving techniques and evidence from leaders in the field of Mohs surgery and cutaneous oncology.

The conference began with a heartfelt opening talk by Dr Tri Nguyen on the importance of compassionate patient care and remembering the human side of surgery. It was a timely reminder that whilst Mohs surgery is highly technical and detail-oriented, the patient experience remains central to what we do. This message resonated strongly with me as I near the completion of fellowship training and begin transitioning towards independent practice.

One of the highlights of the meeting was attending the early morning mini-sessions focusing on periocular reconstruction. Although the 7am starts initially sounded ambitious, they quickly became some of the most educational sessions of the conference. Talks delivered by Drs Jeremy Bordeaux, Stanislav Tolkachjov and Ian Maher covered a wide range of periocular reconstructive techniques, from simpler repairs such as pentagonal wedge excisions and periocular advancement flaps to more advanced procedures including island pedicle flaps and Hughes flaps. I particularly valued the practical surgical pearls on straightforward approaches to canthotomy and cantholysis, techniques which can initially appear intimidating but were broken down into reproducible and approachable steps.

Additional reconstructive sessions on interpolation flaps and cartilage grafting were equally valuable. The teaching throughout the conference consistently balanced elegance of reconstruction with functional preservation. The video-based format used in many sessions was especially helpful, allowing technical details and tissue handling techniques to be appreciated more clearly than through article descriptions alone.

The updates on melanoma and Merkel cell carcinoma management by Dr Drew Saylor were informative. Current and ongoing trials including MERLIN, MelMart and ICEMAN were discussed, highlighting the rapidly evolving evidence base surrounding surgical margins, immunotherapy and sentinel lymph node management in melanoma.

Another standout session focused on facial retaining ligaments and restoration of facial contour using tacking sutures, delivered by Drs Christopher Miller and Nirusha Lachman. This was one of the most thought-provoking sessions of the meeting and significantly changed the way I think about flap movement and facial contour restoration. The speakers demonstrated how retaining ligaments condense fascial layers and protect perforating vessels travelling between deep and superficial fascia. Techniques involving vertical blunt dissection to identify retaining ligaments and perforators, followed by selective ligament

release and tacking sutures anchored to ligamentous structures rather than periosteum, allowed restoration of natural contour and preservation of free margins.

The pathology sessions were also excellent and addressed one of the more challenging aspects of Mohs fellowship training: interpretation of frozen section histology. Topics such as lymphovascular invasion in squamous cell carcinoma, immunohistochemical staining on frozen sections using MART-1, PRAME and SOX10 and recognition of rarer tumours including atypical fibroxanthoma and pleomorphic dermal sarcoma were discussed in a clear and practical manner.

I particularly enjoyed the reconstructive sessions on ear and nasal surgery. Dr H. William Higgins II discussed postauricular interpolation flaps, whilst Dr Ravi Krishnan presented elegant approaches to helical rim advancement flaps and skin grafting. The nasal reconstruction sessions by Dr Jonathan Cook were outstanding, particularly his discussion on internal and external nasal valve preservation and techniques to optimise both functional and cosmetic outcomes during nasal reconstruction.

Outside of the conference itself, Austin was a vibrant and welcoming city with a unique character. I particularly enjoyed the evening kayak tour watching the famous Austin bats emerge at sunset beneath Congress Bridge, alongside sightseeing around the city and experiencing Austin's renowned live music scene. Equally important was the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from the UK and meet new colleagues from across the US and internationally. These connections are one of the most valuable aspects of attending meetings such as ACMS and will hopefully lead to future collaborations.

I am extremely grateful to the BSDS for supporting my attendance at this exceptional meeting through the travelling fellowship. The experience has undoubtedly influenced my surgical thinking and reconstructive approach as I approach the end of fellowship training. I would also like to thank the Newcastle Mohs team for their continued support and mentorship throughout my fellowship year.



Newcastle Mohs surgical fellows