

2005 Dr. Rajalakshmi Tirumalae, India

2007 awardee: Dr. Rajalakshmi Tirumalae, India.

Report of the Gordon Signy fellowship at Dermatologikum, Hamburg, Germany between 9th March and 28th April, 2007

I undertook my fellowship training in Dermatopathology at Dermatologikum, Hamburg, Germany under the mentorship of Dr. Almut Boer, Dermatopathologist and Director of Academic Services. Dermatologikum is a specialist centre for diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases, and also actively engages in research and eagerly imparts academic training to young doctors from all over the world, under the leadership of Prof. Volker Steinkraus. I was readily accepted and welcomed there.

Right from the first day, I took active part in the reporting of slides. I had exposure to a vast variety of lesions such as melanocytic proliferations, inflammatory diseases, adnexal tumours and lymphoid proliferations. These sessions were conducted at a multi-headed microscope, coupled with teaching and discussions. The systematic, pattern-oriented approach that was followed went a long way in instilling the right basic tenets and also correcting common misconceptions. Each of us was encouraged to come out with a diagnosis and the lively interaction with other fellows regarding differential diagnoses made sure we would never forget what we learnt. I also saw patients in the clinic, especially those that were challenging. I also was educated in the interpretation of immunohistochemical stains that accompanied the biopsies many a time and understood their value in complementing the morphologic diagnosis and resolving the grey-zone cases. I also spent a lot of time reviewing the vast and wonderful slide collection at the institute, covering most of the known entities.

Cutaneous “pseudolymphomas” are a continuing enigma. In order to get a better understanding of the diseases lumped under this term, I undertook a study that sought to compare and contrast the B-cell pseudolymphomas with Cutaneous B-cell lymphomas. We focussed on the morphologic patterns, cell composition, use of immunohistochemical markers, PCR for *Borrelia* and clonality of B and T cell receptors. The data is being analysed and the results will be shortly available.

I also studied the rare group of eccrine mixed tumours, comparing them with their apocrine counterparts. I also co-authored two short reports that aid in the early diagnosis of Sebaceous carcinomas, which have been submitted for publication.

I was also exposed to the molecular pathology techniques, namely PCR, with particular emphasis on the detection of clonality. I also familiarized myself with the immunohistologic techniques.

During my stay, I also had the opportunity to attend the annual ADH meeting at Freiburg from the 23rd-25th March. The meeting comprised of engaging lectures by eminent dermatopathologists on topics such as Melanomas, Keratoacanthomas, Lymphomas etc. Particularly useful were the stimulating slide seminars that provoked a lot of thought, comments

and controversy! It was an inspiring experience for youngsters like me, to interact with senior colleagues.

My fellowship training was not merely enriching academically, but was also memorable socio-culturally. I interacted with my fellow trainees from countries like Romania, Bahrain and Colombia and we learnt a lot from each other's experiences. My mentor, Dr. Boer, encouraged me at every step and I owe a lot to her and the institute, for having me there. Mere words fail, sometimes.

Last but not the least, I express my overwhelming gratitude to the chairperson and members of the WPF for conferring me with this honour, which has immensely helped me to grow both as a pathologist and as a person. I am sure every young awardee shares this feeling and lauds the wonderful work done by the foundation. Thank you very much for your support.

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