

Report

Division of Reconstructive Microsurgery, Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital. 5 Fu-Shing St, Kuei-shan, Taoyuan, Taiwan.

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Introduction

I am a fourth year plastic surgery trainee in the West Midlands Deanery. I visited Chang Gung Memorial Hospital (CGMH) Linkou, Taiwan for my travelling fellowship because it is one of the leading centres in the world for reconstructive microsurgery. The purpose of my visit to this unit was to expand my experience in reconstructive microsurgery and spend some time under supervision of Professor Fu-Chan Wei, Professor and Dean, Department of Plastic and Reconstructive surgery in one of the largest microsurgery centres in the world.

Taiwan has a population of approx 22.5 million, second highest population density in the world; mostly living in urban areas, 98% are Han Chinese. Official language is mandarin Chinese. Taiwan has no official religion but beliefs and elements of different religions or philosophers are combined and followed, that is why Taiwan has most temples per capita in the world. Basket ball and baseball are favourite sports.

Chang Gung Memorial Hospital (CGMH) was established in 1976 by Formosa Plastic Group Chairman Yung-ching Wang, and President Yung-Tsai Wang in memory of their father Mr Chang Gang Wang. Starting from a single hospital it now has 5 different branches in Taiwan and planning for further expansions into mainland China. CGMH has played an important role in promoting and flourishing excellence in medical teaching, integrating contemporary medical knowledge and newest technologies with their hard work. CGMH is centre of excellence not only for reconstructive microsurgery but for all major disciplines of medicine. Reconstructive Microsurgery unit is based at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, Linkou. This hospital has 3700 beds and 87 operating theatres, 26 dedicated ITU beds for Plastic Surgery. There are dedicated theatres for reconstructive microsurgery, including 9 theatres for adult patients, 2 for paediatrics and 2 for burn reconstructions. The surgical staff comprises 23 plastic surgeons, 15 residents, 3 international fellows. This unit receives between 80-120 visiting fellows per year. There are 5 surgical divisions in the plastic surgery unit, microsurgery, trauma, craniofacial, burns and cosmetic.

The division of reconstructive microsurgery is lead by Assistant Professor Ming-Huei Cheng with special interest in Breast reconstruction. Prof Fu-Chan Wei has a special interest in head and neck and general reconstruction. Professor David Chuang has special interest in Brachial plexus injuries. Dr Chung-Kan Tsao has special interest in head and neck reconstruction. Approximately 800 to 1000 cases of free tissue transfer and 80 to 100 cases of brachial plexus reconstruction are carried out each year.

Head and neck cancer forms the major workload of this unit. Tumour resection is carried out by ENT surgeons, followed by reconstruction by plastic surgery team. Trainee registrars are actively involved in all aspects of surgery, sometimes performing the whole process of planning, raising and setting in of free flaps independently. It's quite common for a trainee to perform or participate in more than one free flap in a normal working day. During my brief stay in CGMH I observed over 30 free tissue transfers. I also had the honour of assisting Professor Fu-Chen Wei on two occasions, which I am really proud of.

The number of theatre cases and outpatients attendance is phenomenal. An ordinary clinic will have 50-70 patients for one session. One thing I noticed in theatres was the attitude of the operating staff, all of them were calm and content. Everybody wanted to do a good job and nobody looks at their watch. A single team of scrub nurses, anaesthetist and surgeons usually finish the operation they started with generous breaks and good humour even in the late hours of evening. Despite of very heavy workload the working relationship between the staff is exemplary. Teaching sessions for the department are regularly scheduled for 7 am on Wednesday and Saturday. On Saturdays, teaching is followed by research meeting. Attendance is compulsory for all. They take their teaching, training and research very seriously.

Conclusion

My visiting fellowship has provided me with an invaluable training and learning experience. I feel privileged to have the means and support to visit such an efficient, professional and remarkable unit. Performing 3-5 free flaps in a day without a hitch is remarkable achievement and I have seen it happen day after day efficiently and fluently. Prof Fu-Chan Wei needs to be congratulated for running such a remarkable unit.

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Photos

1. Assisting Professor Fu-Chan Wei in theatre.



2. Education building, Chang Gang Memorial Hospital, Linkou

