



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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Dear Members of the Medical Dermatology Society Mentorship Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be involved in the Mentorship program for 2012. I was fortunate enough to complete my mentorship with Professor Victoria Werth at the University of Pennsylvania last October and am all the richer for the experience.

I had been introduced to Professor Werth by my research supervisor for the past five years, Professor Dédée Murrell. I had been fortunate enough to collaborate with these two world experts in autoimmune bullous disease on a number of projects, and the primary objective of my mentorship was to complete a study validating some of the psychometric properties of a quality of life instrument specific to autoimmune bullous disease that our research group in Sydney has developed and validated in Australia. Attending the clinics of Drs. Werth, Stanley, Payne and Fett afforded me the opportunity to recruit significantly more patients than I would have otherwise been able to, given that the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania is a tertiary referral centre for autoimmune bullous disease. We were able to recruit a number of patients far greater than our original target number and were able to validate the reliability of this instrument in the US population which will hopefully serve as a useful clinical tool and represents a promising new outcome measure for research studies in this field.

Another aspect of the mentorship I enjoyed was the ability to attend the basic science research meetings of Drs. Werth, Payne and Stanley. In Australia, there are few institutions that have robust research profiles in both and clinical and basic sciences as these are often approached as distinct entities. Having attended the clinics of these dermatologists and witnessing their clinical acumen, then seeing the brilliant work they are doing in basic science research was educational (for instance learning about Dr. Werth's research putting forward a biological mechanism underpinning the development of Gottron's papules) and inspiring, opening my eyes to the diversity of career options available to medical dermatologists.

Beyond the realm of bullous dermatoses, I was also able to attend the lupus and connective tissue disease clinics of Dr. Werth. This was a field of dermatology to which I had not received significant exposure, but attending Dr. Werth's clinics I was able to see several patients with connective tissue pathologies. I was able to identify the esoteric signs I had read about in so many textbooks and thought I would never get to see first-hand with the rarity of these signs matched equally by Dr. Werth's erudite knowledge of connective



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tissue disease and expertise in the pathophysiology and clinical management of these conditions.

Ms. Joyce Okawa kindly organized a number of additional clinical learning opportunities for me during my time at the University of Pennsylvania. I was able to spend time at the Dermatopathology department with Dr. Rubin who I had already been acquainted with as he had completed a fellowship in Sydney with Professor Murrell. I was also able to attend clinics with Dr Sobanko in Mohs surgery and cosmetic dermatology and spend time with Dr. Crawford during his laser clinics, which were unique learning opportunities for me given that few dermatology departments in Australian hospitals have access to these interventions.

The teaching program at the University of Pennsylvania is exceptional and I was able to participate in this during my mentorship with Dr. Werth. Each week there is a morning dedicated to resident teaching with lectures facilitated by attendings from the Dermatology Department and during the aptly titled weekly 'Gallop round' medical students present interesting cases to the residents as they gallop through the hospital. In addition there is a weekly Duhring conference in which interesting patients are reviewed by residents in a morning clinic, with the cases then discussed with attendings in relation to pathological findings and clinical management. I was fortunate enough to be in Philadelphia during one of the Philadelphia Dermatological Society meetings held at Thomas Jefferson University which was run using a similar format to the Duhring conferences, which was one of the highlights of my mentorship. It was an incredible learning opportunity and I was so grateful to be able to attend the meeting because of the richness in cases presented and the educational pearls from the case discussions held afterwards.

It with the most sincere gratitude that I would like to thank Dr. Werth, Professor Murrell, Ms. Okawa and everyone at the Department of Dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania for their support during my mentorship. Moreover I would like to offer my deep appreciation to the Medical Dermatology Society for extending me the opportunity to travel across the world and participate in the Mentorship Program. It was an incredible learning opportunity and a brilliant life experience which I'm sure will shape me as a future dermatologist.

Yours Sincerely

Deshan Sebaratnam