

# FESSH Visiting Fellowship Traveling Award 2011

## Centro Traumatologico Ortopedico di Torino

Werner Hettwer, Orthopaedic Surgeon, Fellow of the European Board of Orthopaedics and Traumatology

From January to March 2011, I was able to undertake an 8 week visiting fellowship at the Center for Traumatology & Orthopaedics (CTO) in Torino, Italy under the direct supervision of Drs Bruno Battiston and Pierluigi Tos. This fellowship is accredited by the Italian Hand Surgery Society and has kindly been supported by an educational grant from the Federation of European Societies for Surgery of the Hand, FESSH.

The CTO is a dedicated, university affiliated 250 bed orthopaedic specialty hospital with over 60 orthopaedic specialist faculty members across the 6 main departments:

- I General orthopaedics & Shoulder Surgery
- II General Orthopaedics & Foot and Ankle Surgery
- III Traumatology & Microsurgical Reconstruction
- IV Spinal Surgery
- V Musculoskeletal Tumor Surgery and
- VI Hand Surgery

It comprises Italy's largest Trauma Centre, providing 24h on-call service with independent rosters for general trauma, spinal trauma and hand trauma & replantation.

It has also been awarded accreditation as a recognised hand trauma centre by the Federation of European Societies for Surgery of the Hand (FESSH).

Affiliated with the CTO is Maria Adelaide Hospital, a 40 bed elective orthopaedic hospital with an additional 10 orthopaedic specialist staff.

Across 3 departments at both sites, 15 dedicated hand surgeons perform over 2500 operations and over 9500 outpatient consultations annually.

The Microsurgical Unit consists of 6 specialists, disposes of its own microsurgical laboratory and has trained over 280 surgeons through its annual microsurgery course, now running in its 14th year.

During my fellowship, I was cordially received and given the opportunity to participate in all activities of the unit. I had liberal access to the operating theatres and was able to attend at all surgical interventions of my choice as either observer or assistant.

As this is one of Italy's reference centres for microsurgical reconstruction and lesions of peripheral nerves in particular, I was able to see a great variety of microsurgical procedures including vascularised bone grafts, replantation and

revascularisation, nerve repairs and reconstructions usually including nerve grafting, multiple nerve transfers for brachial plexus reconstruction, free soft tissue transfers and a great diversity of secondary reconstructive procedures including arthrodesis, muscle and tendon transfers.

In addition to this, I was able to observe a large number of routine elective and acute hand and wrist procedures, I had free access to the excellent Library, the microsurgical laboratory and was invited to participate in the departments basic microsurgery course.

The two lead clinicians Dr Battiston and Dr Tos and their staff were always willing to get me involved and were happy to discuss and teach me the intricacies of the relevant procedure at hand and share their extensive knowledge and experience. They had no problem switching to excellent English whenever my rather limited knowledge of the Italian language required it.

I am very grateful to them for making this a highly educational experience and for helping me improve my understanding of peripheral nerve repair and brachial plexus reconstruction in particular.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the FESSH for supporting this endeavour.