Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) Provincial Fellows Annual Scientific Meeting

Location: Port Lincoln, SA

Conference Dates: 13 – 16 March 2014

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Antoinette Mowbray

I received assistance towards attending the Port Lincoln SA RANZCOG Provincial Fellows’ Annual Scientific Meeting Diplomate workshops earlier this year. The workshops contributed significantly towards mandatory upskilling and maintenance of essential obstetric skills, in addition to the opportunity to collaborate and network with other rural clinicians practicing obstetrics.

On the first diplomats’ day I chose to attend the Fetal Surveillance Education Program Workshop, facilitated by Mark Beaves. In his usual engaging presentation style it was an excellent opportunity to review the facets of normal and abnormal CTG interpretation. It was also a good opportunity to review unusual or challenging cases from the previous year, and to discuss and obtain his expert opinion regarding CTGs we brought along. We discussed the role of scalp lactates and whether this is useful in rural settings, and also the emerging role of paired umbilical cord lactates and blood gas measurements in the cases of abnormal deliveries; in fact, the recommendation is probably to do this for all deliveries to make collection of cord lactates habitual and make it less likely that they will be missed when really needed.

The second diplomats’ day covered a variety of topics. Prof Bisits conducted a breech masterclass, with high quality models and opportunity to practice breech delivery, including complications such as nuchal arm. He provided good tips on diagnosing nuchal arm position and methods for quickly and safely managing this. He also discussed how to safely choose between caesarean section and allowing vaginal delivery as options for unexpected breech presentation.

We then covered an update in neonatal resuscitation, including theory and practical sessions mentored by two experienced rural paediatricians. Particular focus was given to management of neonatal problems in the rural setting, and what can and should be done while waiting for retrieval if required. This was followed by a discussion on managing common pregnancy problems in the rural setting, such as intrauterine growth restriction, hypertensive disorders in pregnancy, cholestasis etc.
Dr David Simon then spoke about recent advances in labour ward management, noting half a dozen separate areas where we need to be ensuring contemporary practice. These included ensuring all staff involved in intrapartum care being required to do CTG education annually (ie FSEP courses) in order to continue providing intrapartum care; we also again discussed the importance of performing paired umbilical cord lactates for every delivery, in order to avoid missing them in cases where it is very important. It has been shown that in retrospectively analysing cases where lactates were unexpectedly high, we can improve detection of these cases and hopefully thereby neonatal outcomes and Apgar scores.

The second diplomates’ day concluded with case presentations and an expert panel discussion. Colleagues presented cases on topics such as IUGR. I presented a case of a post-operative bleed requiring maternal transfer and return to theatre after Caesarean. We discussed the importance of follow-up and post-surgical review even in the absence of apparent early complications, and early recognition of the deteriorating patient. We also discussed the necessity, especially in a rural area, of crossmatching blood in the presence of atypical antibodies to avoid an emergency situation we have difficulty responding to with appropriate resuscitative means.

It was great networking with other clinicians who practice rural obstetrics. I met GP obstetricians from the Northern Territory and South Australia, and also reconnected with those I trained with in Gippsland. The cocktail party offered a great opportunity to socialise in the evening overlooking the beautiful Port Lincoln bay. It was a great collegiate atmosphere in a beautiful rural setting overlooking the bay in Port Lincoln, and was a good platform to continue working for another year in rural Gippsland.
I feel extremely fortunate to have been able to attend the RANZCOG 2014 Provincial Fellows Annual Scientific Meeting, which was held in Port Lincoln, South Australia, on the 13-16 March.

Port Lincoln is an absolutely stunning waterfront location, with a population of around 14,000 people. Despite its small permanent population, Port Lincoln is quite a popular tourist destination, and is colloquially known as ‘Australia’s Seafood Capital’ - needless to say, the fish that I ate was delicious. Other reasons for the town’s popularity include the great fishing charters available, opportunities to swim with sealions, tuna, and great white sharks (which I’m told is fantastic!), as well as its excellent surf beaches, markets, and picturesque scenery. All the locals that I met whilst in Port Lincoln were very friendly and genuinely interested in why I was visiting their town.

Having had such a positive first experience in Port Lincoln, I am excited to return in the future and spend more time exploring and experiencing what the town has to offer.

The Provincial Fellows ASM is an opportunity for rural and regional specialists, GPs, RANZCOG trainees, midwives, and students to get together and discuss and learn about current topics of interest in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, particularly pertinent to the rural setting.

There were two days of pre-conference workshops aimed at delegates and fellows, consisting of advanced skills training (in areas including repairs of third and fourth degree tears, neonatal resuscitation, and ultrasound) and other interactive sessions. Although these workshops seemed very interesting, I believed that they were too advanced for my current level of knowledge and inappropriate for myself as a medical student, and so did not attend these sessions. This meant that I was able to travel to Port Lincoln on the Friday in preference to the Wednesday, allowing me to attend my scheduled classes and Women’s Health clinics in Bendigo.
I arrived and settled into my hotel room by mid-afternoon on Friday. For the rest of the day I explored the town and had a wonderful time getting to know the place and cementing the fact that I want to return.

The formal content of the ASM began on Saturday morning, and before attending I must admit that I was greatly looking forward to hearing all of the guest speakers, as all of the topics seemed very interesting. I was slightly nervous that the content of the talks would be too complicated for my knowledge base, but went into the ASM with a positive attitude and ready to concentrate and learn.

The morning session focused on intrauterine growth retardation in twins. I was pleased that Dr. Wilkinson opened with a refresher on different presentations of twins in utero, as this is a topic that I had not had much hands-on clinical experience with. He then continued to emphasise the importance of fetal monitoring in multiple pregnancies, and spoke of complications that can occur.

I was pleased that the next speaker was presenting about common conditions in pregnancy, pre-eclampsia, diabetes, and liver disease, which were relevant to my academic level. I felt that this was a very informative and engaging talk.

A highlight of the day for me was watching the RANZCOG trainees make their brief presentations on research that they had been conducting throughout their traineeships. I found all of their topics to be quite interesting, and it was great to see their confidence when speaking about topics that they were so involved in. The fact that the presentations were brief also ensured that they obtained and held everybody’s attention so well.

The rest of the day included presentations on genital plastic surgery, iron deficiency in pregnancy, perinatal autopsy, and experiences from Papua New Guinea and Ethiopia. The president and new CEO of RANZCOG also addressed members of the college about changes made and their roles.

Day one of the ASM was overall a very informative and beneficial day. I felt as though I learnt a lot and felt genuinely interested in all of the presentations made. During the tea and lunch breaks I also enjoyed meeting GPs, registrars, and consultants from many different states, and learning about their areas of work.
Day two of the ASM had just two educational presentations, both of which were excellent. I learnt about the use of mifepristone in medical abortions and the changing attitudes to its use, and in the second talk we learnt about clinical management of the itchy vulva.

The remainder of the day was mainly discussing changes within the college and trainee programs, and also medico-legal issues in relation to obstetrics and gynaecology, which was quite interesting to hear about.

I have come away from the RANZCOG 2014 Provincial Fellows Annual Scientific Meeting feeling as though I am now equipped with more academic knowledge, as well as further insight into the O & G training program. The fact that I had such great interest in each of the presentations highlighted to me that I would like to pursue Obstetrics and Gynaecology as a career, either by entering the training program or potentially doing an Advanced Diploma and becoming a GP Obstetrician. I have also met some wonderful clinicians whom I hope I can organise an elective placement with for next year.

The next Provincial Fellows ASM is to be held in Taree, NSW, and I am hoping to attend this as well.

I would like to thank everyone at RAMUS so much for providing me with the funding to attend this conference, as I would not have been able to attend without your assistance. I appreciate the opportunity very much.