

EBCOG FELLOWSHIP REPORT FROM IRYNA STELMAKH

I am Iryna Stelmakh, an obstetrician and gynaecologist from Ukraine, who received the possibility to go on a 3 months fellowship to Sant'Orsola Hospital in Bologna, Italy. I am extremely thankful for this possibility, as this fellowship has been an amazing experience that helped me grow professionally.

The hospital I stayed in was Sant'Orsola-Malpighi Hospital, a clinical hospital of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum University. I spent my time in a gynaecology department of obstetrics and gynaecology building, which is ruled by a professor Renato Seracchioli. I felt welcomed in the department and my mentor – doctor Alessandro Arena was very helping and took care of me, so I could always ask him a question or ask for help.

By the time I was making the arrangements for the fellowship I specifically asked to stay in the outpatient unit, due to a number of reasons. First, I knew my future practice would be significantly dedicated to the outpatient practice, second, I understood I lacked proper up-to-date gynaecology training, due to both war and Ukrainian training system, and third, because this hospital has a specialized endometriosis center, where I could get the best knowledge in this area.

Due to the fact that Ukrainian medical education and specialist training are not fully recognized in the European Union, my stay in the hospital could be mostly observational, but I was allowed to perform some kinds of exams on patients that had to be supervised by other doctors.

In order to speak about what I have learned during the fellowship it would be better to explain it by each clinic within the outpatient unit.

- Endometriosis. Around 1/3 of my time was dedicated to endometriosis. The most significant thing I have learned was the ultrasound examination of deep infiltrating endometriosis, which I have never seen or performed in Ukraine. I was given a possibility to perform some ultrasound exams by myself, with the resident doctors guiding me how to do it. But even observing it I learned a lot. Also, talking about the treatment, I learned the process of decision-making not only in more typical cases, but when women had certain specific situations or when the decision had to be made between medical or surgical treatment.
- Hysteroscopy. This is a clinic where I experienced work that is totally different to what I have seen. Apart from some private clinics, the way hysteroscopy is usually performed in Ukraine is very outdated. So although I could not perform the hysteroscopies, I still learned how it should be performed on the ambulatory level. I also observed a few quite rare and interesting cases that showed me how one should act in such situations.
- Urogynaecology. I did not expect to be very interested in this clinic, but unexpectedly, I learned new and quite useful things there. First, I was surprised by how detailed and consequent the urogynaecological exam is. I even performed the exam a few times so I could better understand and remember how to do it and evaluate the results. Second, I saw how much emphasis is put on the physical therapy and how important it is to have specialists and specific centers for pelvic floor rehabilitation, especially because this field almost does not exist in Ukraine.
- Endocrinology and Menopause. As long as I am very interested in endocrine gynaecology I really wanted to see local approaches to management of these conditions. It really helped me become more confident in the field of endocrine disorders, and it was especially useful for me in terms of the adolescent patients.

- Ultrasound. Besides the clinics mentioned above, I also spent some time in the clinic dedicated specifically to different particular cases that need ultrasound evaluations or check-ups. As long as my training in Ukraine did not include sufficient training in ultrasound, this clinic became a possibility for me to see the management of other different conditions, with a number of useful interesting cases.
- Colposcopy. I only spent a few days there, but I, first, definitely learned the algorithms for cervical cancer early detection, follow-up and treatment. Second, there are some aspects in terms of the equipment that I have seen that I would like to implement in my practice.

In addition, as long as the hospital has a specialized endometriosis center, I also observed some surgeries for deep infiltrative endometriosis, where I learned about techniques and instruments that I have never, honestly, seen before.

The last but not least, this time was very valuable from the organizational point of view. The way gynaecological help and specialist training are organized in Italy is quite different to Ukraine. In terms of medical help, there are things we can definitely adopt, especially when it comes to patients' awareness on regular check-ups and trust in doctors. In terms of training, there is a lot to say, but I was excited by the level of respect the residents receive from their supervisors.

Overall, this fellowship was an extraordinary time for me that contributed so much to me as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. What is important, that it would not be possible without the financial grant of 3000€ I received for the fellowship. The grant fully covered my travel expenses, accommodation, utilities, groceries, and other minor spendings.

I want to thank so much the EBCOG for giving me with this opportunity, for both the fellowship and the financial support!