



The Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa
11th Weekend for Fellows
Spier 17 - 19 January 2020

Julien Kooze 2020



The 11th Annual Gastro Foundation Fellows Weekend

In the stunning surroundings of Stellenbosch, on the 17th of January 2020, Spier would once again host the 11th annual Gastro Foundation Fellows weekend. The much anticipated weekend far exceeded the expectations of every Fellow who attended. One thing about the Cape and Stellenbosch region is that when it wants to show off its beauty, it is almost impossible to top. The Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa could not have got it better in any way, and it was an incredible privilege to attend the weekend.

The weekend started with fellows in gastroenterology making their way down to Cape Town International Airport, not only from all over South Africa but also from our neighbouring northern countries. The logistics around flight cancellations and last minute rescheduling

(largely due to the crisis at our national carrier airline) were all met with smiles and a level of

organisation that can only come from a very dedicated team. On landing, we were promptly met by our transport shuttle and taken off to the beautiful Spier Hotel and Conference Centre.

After a quick cup of coffee and breakfast snacks we gathered in the conference centre and were welcomed by a passionate Prof Chris Kassianides, the chairman and founding member of the Gastroenterology Foundation of Sub-Saharan Africa. It was clear from the outset how passionate his team is and how privileged we were to be there. The introduction of the academic speakers, guest speakers and the program as a whole vividly reaffirmed this notion.

The morning talks covered a number of broad topics relevant to all disciplines of gastroenterology. Dr Adam Boutall (who is arguably one of the most entertaining speakers) started off by covering large bowel obstruction and, as usual, left most of

the fellows feeling like they somehow had finally grasped a topic that they had spent previous hours poring over in a little under 15 minutes. The rest of the morning sessions addressed chronic pancreatitis, hilar cholangiocarcinoma, liver associated enzyme abnormalities, liver transplant, IBD and the very entertaining "difficult colonoscopy".

As in previous years, the fellows were then split into two groups for the afternoon sessions. HPB and Upper GIT surgeons formed one group and the physicians and colorectal surgeons the other. Every topic seemed to have been carefully selected and opened itself up to academic discussions that went on well beyond the lectures and into the evening. As per tradition, the evening academia ended off with the very entertaining Team Quiz. Quizmasters, Prof Jake Krige and Prof Ed Jonas, tested the general knowledge of the fellows on a variety of topics. Despite most of the surgeons being disadvantaged by the ratio of history related questions to sport related questions, we were fortunate enough to have an outlier, and I am proud to report that it was a surgical team who won honours in the end. This may have been due to the fact that bribes were accepted and that a surgical team was responsible for marking the winning teams answers.

At the end of the first day, dinner was met with great conversation, numerous newly made friendships and outstanding vino from the region. The late evening was followed soon after with a morning run through the Spier vineyards. It was a great opportunity to spend some time with leaders in the field of gastroenterology on a more personal level away from academia.

On Saturday, Fellows were given the opportunity to work in small groups where relevant topics using case reports as references were discussed. The fellows split up into four groups, namely HPB and UGIT, Colorectal, Medical Gastroenterology and Paediatric Gastroenterology. This was incredibly valuable just

prior to exams and afforded one the opportunity to address areas of controversy and new developments.

That evening, the fellows and delegates were addressed by guest speakers Prof Jonathan Jansen and Dr Anthony Beeton. These esteemed guest speakers' much anticipated addresses lived up to every expectation. Prof Jonathan Jansen's thought provoking address *The dilemmas of race in medical science research*, was followed by Dr Anthony Beeton's address *Error, Disclosure and Approach to the Dissatisfied Patient*.

Sunday morning was a chance to consolidate. Highlights included lectures from Prof Vernon Louw on iron physiology, Dr Anthony Beeton on Patient Blood Management and an incredible account from Prof Jean Botha on "The aging surgeon and our responsibilities". The variety yet direct relevance of all the guest speakers' topics to those in the medical field was something very unique to this weekend's program. The weekend concluded at midday on Sunday the 19th.

Only established in 2006, it is difficult to understand how The Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa has managed to succeed and surpass its aim in such a short time. The Fellows weekend was outstanding in every way. New friendships were forged and the contributions from leading experts and mentors in gastroenterology will shape the new generation's practices for years to come. South Africa can be proud of a foundation that is truly contributing to the academic excellence in the field of Gastroenterology. We thank Prof Chris Kassianides, all the experts who generously gave of their time and knowledge, the entire team behind the Gastroenterology Foundation of South Africa, the guest speakers, Karin Fenton, Bini Seale and all the sponsors (Sandoz, Surgical Innovations & Takeda) for their incredibly generous contributions.

Colin Noel
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