

The 15th Gastroenterology Foundation Fellows Meeting

It was indeed a privilege to be part of this meeting, having participated in three previous ones. The meeting was held between the 19th-21st of April 2024, at the renowned Lord Charles Hotel, which is situated at the foothills of the Helderberg mountains on a 22 acre of picturesque landscape with a calm serenity; a very ideal location for this meeting. It was the fellows' second meeting in this hotel.

Upon arrival, we were greeted with a buffet, which eventually turned out to be an ideal socializing joint for the fellows. Citing the fellows from other institutions was more like a spark of lightning that immediately ignited a deeper fellowship with a calming effect after the hustling and bustling from hospital work.

Soon after, the day's activity began with an opening session by Dr Leo Katsidzira, a newly appointed trustee of the foundation, who delivered a talk on colorectal cancer in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prof Gill Watermeyer then took us through on advanced combination therapies in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. This was followed by a session with Prof Galya Chinnery on surveillance strategies of Barrett's oesophagus. A tea break interlude spiced the lecture series, subsequently, Dr Dion Levin elaborated on gastroparesis: approach and management. The subject of polypectomy continued to remain an area of interest especially in the context of several advanced techniques with variable learning curves for fellows. Prof Adam Boutall highlighted the tips and tricks of polypectomy. In order to fortify the clinicians on the science of research and critical appraisals of articles, Prof Reid Ally deconstructed the mysteries of statistical tools in data analysis and their significances under the topic "Evidence based medicine and critical appraisal".

The highlight of the day was the overview on how to set up an independent endoscopic unit within a private hospital setting, and how to fund it by Dr Colin Rush, who is an epitome of the dream of many private doctors. This lecture was spiced with the input from the funding partners of Investec private banking. The last activity of the day was indeed a break from the regular, which was a quiz session by Dr Dion Levin/Prof Adam Boutall, which cuts across sports, social and global events. It was also an opportunity for team building with both the surgical and medical units.

Day 2 began with an early morning run/walk. Muscle aches, heart racing and sweat dripping like blood, but that sets the tone for the day's series of lectures. The session was open with a lecture on High resolution manometry, a general approach by Dr Botha Sassa. She was indeed the best for this session. We were soon separated into smaller groups for more focused talks and interactions covering colonoscopy and interventions, ultrasound scan, pathologies in upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, general gastrointestinal disorders, Inflammatory Bowel Disease and hepatology topics. These sessions were ideal both for exam preparations and clinical practice.

The highlight of the second day was the session by Kevin Hogan, the head of fraud risk, Investec private banking. He left us bewildered, with lots of questions to ponder upon. He made us to understand our ignorance in the money sector, we appeared very vulnerable, but also left us better equipped on how to deal with these challenges.

I woke up on Sunday morning with residual muscle aches from the previous run but opted to have the experience of the gym center in the hotel. I needed to shed some more calories following the irresistible meals.

Prof Galya Chinnery ignited the days session with the upper GIT endoscopy quiz, a session you will never wish to miss. The program was ended following a session on critical appraisal of articles, by applying the science from the previous talk. This was chaired by Prof Reid Ally and Prof Mashiko Setshedi.

The Fellows weekend will continue to remain a landmark in my career development. Thanks to Prof Kassianides, the trustees of the Gastroenterology Foundation, the administration, all my teachers and the sponsors for the awesome opportunity.

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