

The IFSSH Congress in London in June 2022 saw the launch of the inaugural IFSSH Fellowship Programme. Thirty young hand surgeons from around the globe visited UK centres of hand surgery excellence for two weeks and then travelled to London to attend the conference.

This federation was formed in 1966 to coordinate the activities of the various Societies for Surgery of the Hand throughout the world and in this way to increase and spread knowledge of surgery of the hand. The Organising Committee agreed early in the conference planning process that a Fellowship Programme would meet a founding IFSSH objective in furthering hand surgery practice and education worldwide and would forge a new network of international connections and friendships. Aligned with the ambition to have a truly global congress was the intention to include surgeons from a range of high-, low- and middle-income countries. This of course required significant financial investment and we were very grateful to IFSSH, FESSH, BSSH and BFIRST for answering Mr Jonathan Hobby's calls for sponsorship.

In Summer 2020 a Fellowship Subcommittee was formed of Stephen Hodgson, Wee Leon Lam, Jonathan Hobby and Jonathan Jones and they were joined by members of the IFSSH Young Hand Surgeons Committee; Helen Wohlgemut, Alison Kinghorn, Rowa Taha, Ted Welman, Rob Miller and Lynette Spalding. Several members of the committee had longstanding involvement with BSSH international outreach projects, and their experience proved invaluable: both in the practicalities of international guests and in creating a broad and inclusive application process. The emerging COVID-19 Pandemic raised challenges at every stage of the planning process, and travel uncertainty remained a constant feature.

A competitive application process was opened in Summer 2021, aimed at surgeons within three years of independent practice (the equivalent of either senior trainees or new consultants), bearing in mind the varied training routes for hand surgery between different countries. This was advertised online in addition to being sent to all international hand societies for distribution, plus any known contacts in countries without formal hand societies. All applications were marked by members of the committee based on a standardised marking scheme. The high standard of candidates was very clear.

Hand surgery units across the UK were invited to express interest in hosting the fellows. To provide the greatest range of experience, successful units were paired and then worked together to provide bespoke educational and social programmes. The Jubilee weekend fell between the fellowships and the IFSSH congress which gave an ideal opportunity to bring all fellows together in London for the Bank Holiday weekend celebrations.

The 21st May came round, and excited fellows flew from around the globe to start the program (MAP 1). Units from around the United Kingdom enthusiastically hosted the future leaders in hand surgery (MAP TWO). The fellows indicated their sub-speciality interests and were successfully matched to pairs of units that matched their educational interests. We ensured that where possible the pairs of units were geographically close. Host units were chosen throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. We planned the fellowships so that the paired units were geographically close and offered complementary experience. The host surgeons did an excellent job of organising educational and social programmes. We are very grateful to the many people who worked to make the placements productive and enjoyable. The feedback from the Fellows has been excellent.

The fellows spent two weeks observing what hand surgery has to offer in the United Kingdom. With one-to-one teaching, training, and mentorship. Perhaps one of the most exciting opportunities of this program, was the opportunity to network and make friendships with hand surgeons from around the world.

Following the various fellowships around the country the fellows travelled to London for a packed program before the IFSSH Congress. An educational morning was held at the Royal College of Surgeons England. Here the fellows had teaching on Brachial Plexus and Congenital Hand by Wee Lam, Gill Smith, Cy Ng and Dominic Power, leading experts within their fields in the United Kingdom and further afield. That evening, after a

beautiful walk along the Thames River in the (thankfully) sunny London, the fellows attended a private dinner arranged by Lorenzo Garagnani at The Ivy Tower Bridge. This was an excellent evening with fine dining and even better company.

Ted Welman and Rob Miller designed an excellent tourist day, starting off with coffee in Notting hill, walking along the beautiful canals in little Venice, through Hyde Park, past Buckingham Palace to give a quick wave to Queen Elizabeth. A pit-stop for shopping in Knightsbridge, stop off at Trafalgar Square, blinded by the neon lights in Piccadilly Circus, ending up in Camden for a casual dinner. Hopefully, all the fellows enjoyed the British hospitality, developed new friendships, and got a flavour of the bustling city of London.

The IFSSH Congress London 2022 started the week beginning 6th June. It has been one of the first face-to-face international meetings in hand surgery for many of us. The fellows were able to enjoy a free registration to hear all the wonderful presentations, attend the gala dinner, to network and for many of them, to present their own research. The fellows were presented at the closing ceremony, where the fellowship program was recognised as being the jewel in the crown of the London 2022 congress, and we all hope the legacy of it continues.

We are thankful for so many things: for the funding to support the program, for all the people who helped arrange the fellowship, for the opportunity to meet following the pandemic and most of all to meet the fellows, who are an amazing, dynamic group of young people. They are the future of hand surgery, and the future looks so bright. So over to our wonderful friends and colleagues in Washington USA, we can't wait to see you IFSSH 2025!

(NB: Throughout we have referred to the Fellows as IFSSH Fellows. We acknowledge that the funding meant individuals were funded by a variety of IFSSH, FESSH, BSSH and BAPRAS)



Photo 2: Teaching Day at The Royal College of Surgeons England.



Photo 3: Shot at Tower Bridge on the Tourist Day Arranged by Ted and Rob.



Photo 4: Closing Ceremony at the IFSSH Congress. All the fellows receiving their certificate.



Photo 1: Group shot of the IFSSH fellows at The Royal College of Surgeons England.



Map 1: The country of origin of the IFSSH fellows.



Map 2: Units hosting the IFSSH Fellows in the UK.