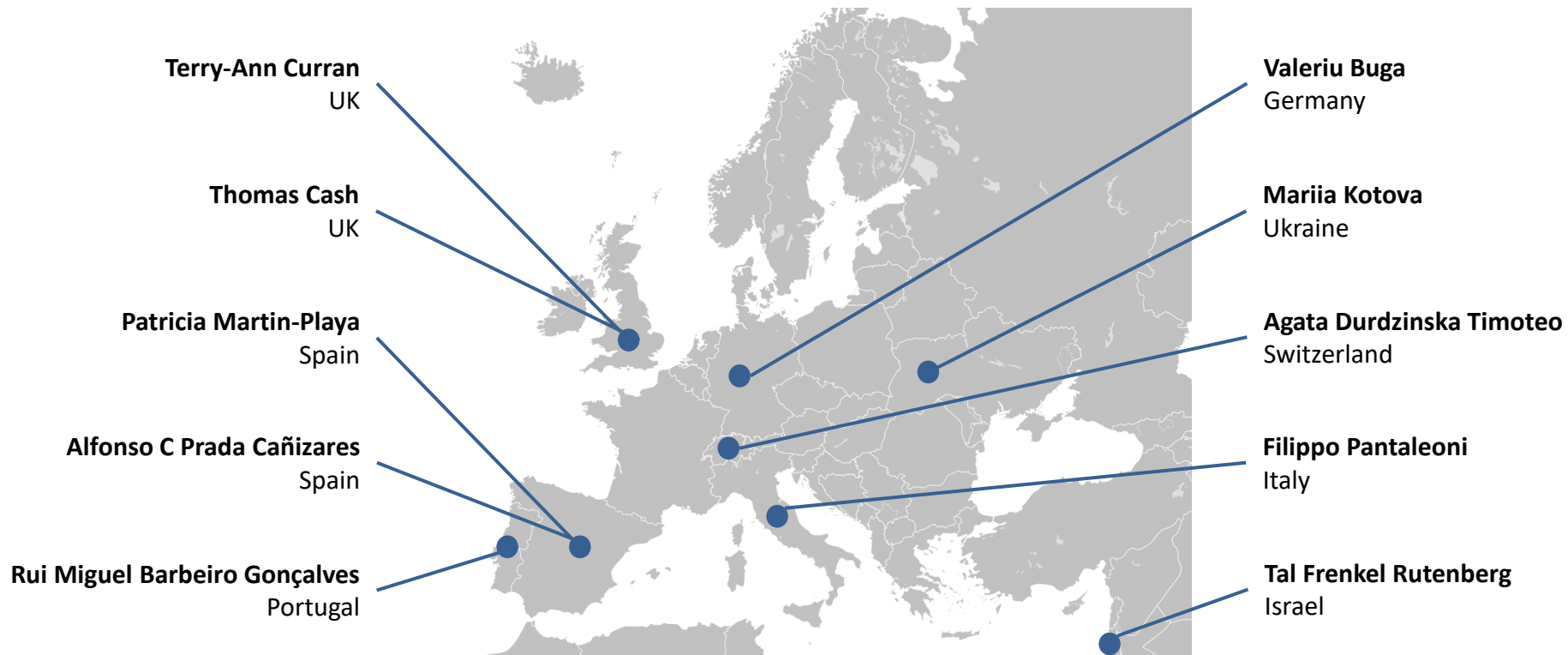
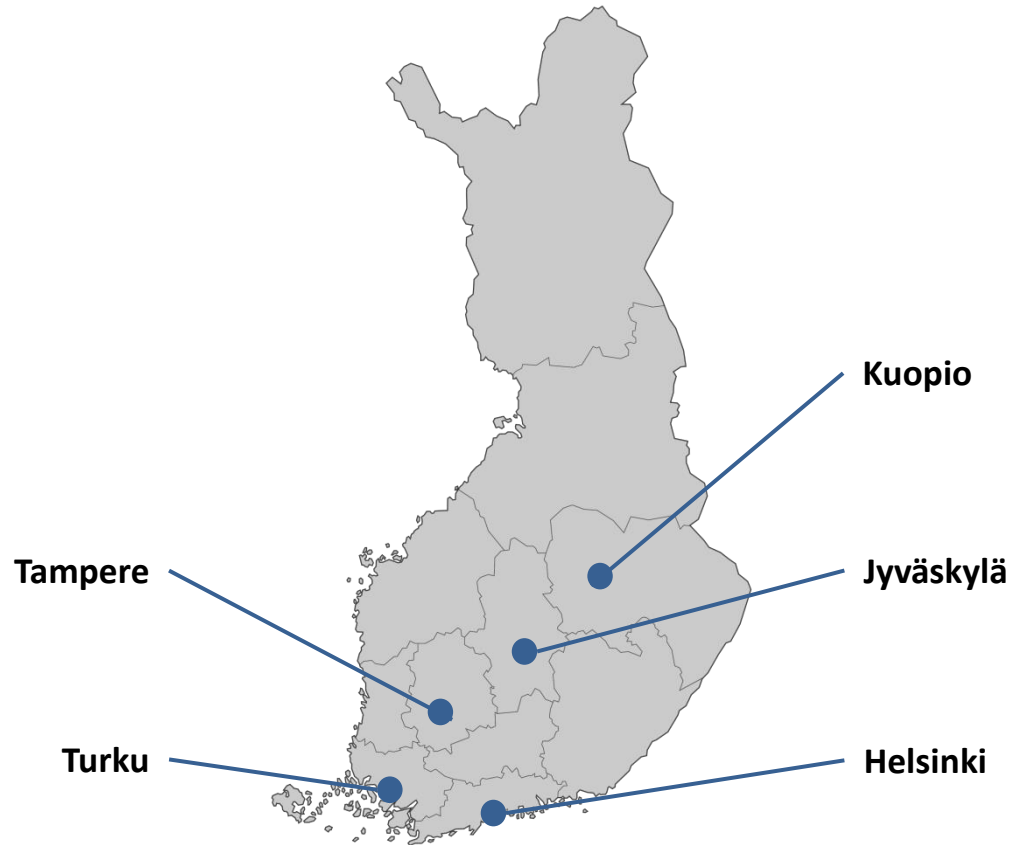


FESSH/FSSH 2025 CONGRESS FELLOWSHIP FELLOWS



FESSH/FSSH 2025 CONGRESS FELLOWSHIP CENTERS



REPORT – TERRY-ANN CURRAN

Thank you for accepting me for this fellowship. I applied as I am a new consultant in the UK and eager to build a network of mentors who I can seek support from in my first few years, in addition to meeting peers who are also beginning their consultant careers. I am a plastic surgeon with a special interest in hand surgery and completed the European Hand Diploma in 2023. I have fellowships in extremity reconstruction and microsurgery and a special interest in nerve reconstruction and chronic pain.

I was assigned to visit Turku and Jyväskylä with my travelling partner Dr Agata Durdzinska Timoteo, from Switzerland. The Turku team was coordinated by Associate Professor Markus Pääkkönen across three sites; Tyks Orto, an Orthopaedic hospital with a specialist Hand Surgery Team managing both elective and trauma hand conditions, Majakka Hospital managing paediatric hand surgery and Mehiläinen Private Hospital. The week was packed with



operating lists and clinics across a separate timetable for each fellow. We were encouraged to scrub and assist for cases thus allowing us to see all aspects of the surgery and generate a sense of involvement with the team. During cases we discussed the academic projects ongoing in the department and were able to share our experiences of similar complex cases at home. We also joined the Musician Clinic which is a multidisciplinary clinic for professional musicians that focuses on upper limb issues. I have not experienced a clinic specifically for musical artists prior to this and it was enlightening to see the team at work and learn how these individuals optimise function while managing a heavy manual commitment to their art. We were also invited by one of the consultants to join them at their summer house and enjoy the delights of the lake and family sauna. I realise that sharing in a relaxing activity for a team is a fantastic opportunity to unwind and bond. The weather and general landscape would make this specific activity somewhat complex to introduce at home but it would be well worth investigating for my department.

At the weekend I travelled to Jyväskylä which is 3 ½ hours apart by train. We were met on the first day by Professor Teemu Karjalainen at Hospital Nova. The week was compressed to 4 days as a consequence of the national Mid-Summer holiday break. The orthopaedic team in the hospital had kindly volunteered their lists to the hand surgery team that week to optimise the volume of cases seen in theatre. Unfortunately, some cases booked that week were cancelled due to anaesthetic concerns for the patients but the lists were then filled with other cases. We attended theatre and clinic sessions and spent a small volume of the time discussing research both published by the department and in progress. We were encouraged to scrub in for theatre cases and I assisted at my first distal radius fixation and observed a skilled and accomplished team perform a complex elbow reconstruction for a

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young lady. At the end of the week, we travelled a short distance to Professor Teemu's home to meet with the remainder of the travelling fellows and enjoy Mid-Summer. The gathering together before the conference is something which I would encourage is introduced for future travelling FESSH fellows. It gave us the opportunity to meet in a casual, social setting and beyond discussing clinical experience, allowed us to learn about each other. The credit for the how well we got to know each other is due to Professor Teemu who had arranged games and quizzes, hikes, canoes, swimming and sauna. As a consequence, during the FESSH meeting we often met up to attend talks together and introduce each other to our wider circle of colleagues.



We travelled to Helsinki as a group on the train and met on the Monday for a guided tour of the city and a dinner with the organising committee. The education session the following day was okay but the time does not permit the span of the interests of the group and I would suggest in future that this is the day the we each present our experience of the fellowship and possibly where the fellows can thank the hosts for selecting and hosting us in their units. The fellow segment at the FESSH with the video compilation is a good idea but 15minutes is too long and would be more enjoyable if each team present their video in 2 minutes followed by a brief thank you from each duo to each hosting team.

In conclusion as a result of this fellowship, I have made life-long friends from across Europe who I intend to meet up with at future FESSH and hand

meetings. I have also connected with experts in research and surgery who I will not hesitate to approach if needed.

REPORT – THOMAS CASH

I would like to start by thanking the centre hosts; Dr Mikko Räisänen/Dr Matti Juntunen (Kuopio) and Dr Markus Pääkkönen (Turku) for looking after us so well. Also, special thanks to Dr Teemu Karjalainen for hosting us over midsummer, my fellowship partner Rui Gonçalves from Portugal and the other congress fellows who collectively greatly enhanced this experience.

Week 1 - Kuopio University Hospital

I arrived on the early morning flight from Helsinki into Kuopio's small regional airport. I went straight to the hospital and met Rui and the centre hosts. Kuopio is a medium size hospital serving the population of Eastern Finland. After a quick breakfast, we headed to the cadaveric lab where I was able to perform several approaches and operations. This included an open TFCC repair, ECU stabilisation, shotgun approach to the PIPJ and hemi-hamate arthroplasty.

The rest of the week was spent between theatre and clinic. Most of the surgery was performed using WALANT. One of the surgeons had an interest in arthroscopy and we took part in an arthroscopic trapeziectomy. Each evening, we went for dinner as a team. We also relaxed in the sauna and swam in Lake Kallavesi. The week finished on a high with a PhD doctoral thesis defence and celebratory evening meal.



Week 2 - Turku Tyks Ortho Surgical Hospital

After a 7 hour cross country train ride we arrived in Turku, the former capital of Finland. We met the centre host Dr Markus Pääkkönen who had put together a busy schedule at this large specialist hospital in South-West Finland. We spent most days in theatre and were exposed to a wide range of cases, both routine and challenging. Most operations were performed under regional or general anaesthesia. Markus also demonstrated his published technique for minimally invasive distal radius plating.

We visited the Mehiläinen Neo private hospital with Dr Heidi Vastamäki. This was valuable and allowed us to appreciate the interaction between public and private healthcare in Finland. In the evenings, we explored the city and watched FC Inter Turku beat Kotka 5-0. We also spent a fantastic evening at Dr Hanna-Stiina Taskinen's summer cabin on a small island in the archipelago.



Midsummer Weekend

Midsummer is a national holiday where Finns traditionally travel to their summer cabins to spend time with family. Dr Teemu Karjalainen kindly hosted the travelling fellows at his beautiful lakeside home in Jyväskylä. This was a real highlight of the trip and the first time we came together as a group. Activities included hiking, kayaking, swimming and of course sauna.

Week 3 - FESSH Congress

The final week was spent in Helsinki. There was sightseeing tour, fellows dinner and an informative teaching session organised by the education committee. The conference itself was excellent and I presented two pieces of research on dual mobility thumb CMCIJ replacements and the use of radiographic jigs CMCIJ arthritis.

Final thanks to FESSH for the opportunity to take part in this fantastic fellowship programme. I would highly recommend it.



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REPORT – PATRICIA MARTIN-PLAYA

My name is Patricia Martin-Playa, I am a trained plastic surgeon currently working in Bilbao, Spain, and with a special interest and background in Hand Surgery, and this past June I had the privilege of becoming one of the European surgeons awarded with the FESSH fellowship in Finland.



Overall, it has been a great experience. I had the chance to share my two one-week postings with orthopedic surgeon Dr Mariia Kotova, from Ukraine. We spent our first week in Helsinki, at Helsinki University Hospital (HUS), and the second week in Tampere, at Tampere University Hospital (TAYS), as travelling fellows in their Hand Surgery Departments. In both centers we had the opportunity to see some complex hand cases such as hand and wrist tumors, microsurgery, management of mangled upper limb, obstetric brachial plexus surgery in a seven months old baby, or tetraplegia surgery with the dedicated Tetraplegia Team (HUS). But we also saw some more common cases as well, like fixation of different fractures like some distal radius fractures (some of them not as easy as they seemed, as it usually happens), or arthroscopy.

This two weeks gave me some useful insight on how other hand departments work, being of special interest the fact that in Finland hand surgeons cope with all upper limb cases (both soft tissue and bone) due to their specific training, only available in very few countries. As a fellow, I believe that the important thing you get from visiting other countries and departments is not that you learn how to perform the surgery itself, since you are supposed to already know that, but learn how they do it and, why they organize their daily work, how they perform their investigation, how they organize resident's teaching programmes... there are many things to learn from and tips and tricks to take home if you are alert and willing to learn!



After this two weeks, we had the unique unique chance of living a “real Finnish” experience during Juhannus (Midsummer weekend) thanks to Dr Teemu Karjalainen, who offered us all a weekend in Central Finland Lakes with a great experience including sauna, of course. This experience helped us create strong bonds between the fellows (and himself) that hopefully will last.

To finish our fellowship experience, all the fellows gathered in Helsinki for the last week to attend some dedicated activities for ourselves, like guided tours and special teachings, as well as joining the FESSH congress. As always, the congress fulfilled my expectations.

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I am now back home trying to implement some of the useful things that I learnt last month, not only from the centers that I have visited, but also all the things that I learnt from the other fellows during the great time we spent together.

If anyone is in doubt whether they should apply for the fellowship, please, do not hesitate, it is a unique professional and personal opportunity to grow as a hand surgeon.

Patricia Martin-Playa
Plastic Surgeon and Hand Surgeon
Cruces University Hospital
Bilbao, Spain

REPORT – ALFONSO C PRADA CAÑIZARES

Description of the Experience

Thanks to the scholarship awarded by FESSH, I had the opportunity to undertake a training placement in Finland, where I was able to join the hand surgery team at two leading hospitals. During my stay, I actively participated in both clinical and surgical activities in private and public practice, attending complex procedures and collaborating in the assessment and follow-up of patients. I also gained first-hand insight into the Finnish healthcare system, the organisation of services, and the multidisciplinary team approach. This experience allowed me to broaden my knowledge of advance in hand surgical techniques and the comprehensive management of hand and wrist pathologies. I have also been able to deepen my research activity.

Personal and Professional Impact

The placement in Finland has been a significant boost to my professional and personal development. I have acquired new technical skills and have been able to compare different therapeutic approaches, which will undoubtedly enrich my daily clinical practice. The cultural and professional exchange with colleagues from other countries was especially valuable, enabling me to establish international contacts and open new avenues for future collaboration. I believe this experience has strengthened my vocation and my commitment to excellence in hand surgery.

I was particularly impressed by the emphasis placed on teamwork and multidisciplinary communication, as well as the warmth and hospitality of the local professionals, who made me feel welcome at all times. Beyond the clinical setting, I had the chance to explore the Finnish way of life, appreciating the serene beauty of its landscapes, the tranquility of its cities, and the richness of its culture. I learned to value the deep connection with nature, so prevalent in Finnish life, and experienced firsthand the famous "sisu"—that attitude of perseverance and resilience that characterizes the Finnish people. All of these elements contributed to making my stay even more meaningful and memorable, leaving a lasting impression on my personal outlook.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to FESSH for this opportunity and for supporting the training of young surgeons. I am also grateful to the team at the hospitals in Kuopio and Jyväskylä (specially to Mikko Raisanen and Teemu Karjalainen) for their warm welcome, generosity, and willingness to share their knowledge. Finally, I encourage other professionals to take advantage of such scholarships, as they offer a transformative experience both professionally and personally.

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REPORT – VALERIU BUGA

Tampere (July 9–13 & 17, 2025)

In Tampere, our host was **Dr. Camilla Hellevuo**, who provided us access to an engaging range of cases. With my fellowship partner **Tal Frank Rutenberg**, I assisted and observed numerous procedures, including a complex forearm fracture with nerve, artery, and tendon involvement, showcasing excellent multidisciplinary teamwork.

We also observed elective cases—wrist arthroscopy, tendon and nerve repairs, arthrodeses and had rich case discussions between surgeries.

On July 17, I attended the theoretical module of the **Hand Arthroscopy Course**, organised by **Dr. Mikko Räsänen**. The faculty included renowned experts like:

- Gregory Bain (Australia)
- Jan-Ragnar Haugstvedt (Norway)
- Jarkko Vasenius & Lauri Lindroos (Finland)
- Mark Baratz (USA)
- PC Ho (China)
- Robert Gvozdenovic (Denmark)

Dr. Räsänen himself, a FESSH Research Committee member and national educator

The topics included indications, surgical techniques, and complication management in wrist and small joint arthroscopy, providing valuable updates and insights.

Helsinki (July 16–19, 2025)

At Helsinki University Hospital, we were hosted by **Dr. Panu Nordback**, President of the Finnish Society for Surgery of the Hand, and **Prof. Jorma Ryhänen**, Head of Department.

Among the advanced procedures we witnessed:

- A vascularised medial femoral condyle bone graft reconstruction for the scaphoid – technically demanding and expertly performed.
- Paediatric cases, including multiple corrective osteotomies for Madelung deformity.
- Exploration and repair of the posterior interosseous nerve in the proximal forearm.

Social and Educational Events

On **July 23**, we enjoyed a **cultural city tour of Helsinki**, graciously organised by our hosts, finishing with a wonderful dinner wonderfully showcasing Finnish hospitality.

On **July 24**, the **Teaching Day** in Helsinki focused on different key topics like:

- Clinical research in hand surgery
- Tumours of the hand
- Nerve reconstruction techniques

The day comprised expert presentations and interactive case discussions, offering valuable insights into academic and clinical aspects of hand surgery.

FESSH 2025 Congress (July 25–28, 2025)

From **July 25–28**, we participated in the **FESSH 2025 Congress** held in Helsinki. The program featured keynote lectures, instructional courses, symposia, and free-paper sessions on wrist arthroscopy, nerve repair, trauma management, microsurgery, paediatric hand surgery etc. — allowing us to engage with global hand surgery innovations and peers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to:

- **Dr. Camilla Hellevuo, Dr. Mikko Räisänen, Dr. Panu Nordback, and Prof. Jorma Ryhänen** for their warm hospitality, expertise, and willingness to share their clinical experience.
- **Mr. Jonathan Hobby**, the initiator of this fellowship, and **Csilla Szegedi**, for their essential support and coordination throughout the entire process.
- **Tal Frank Rutenberg**, my fellowship partner, for sharing many enriching professional and personal experiences during this program.

Conclusions

This comprehensive fellowship—encompassing clinical rotations, an international arthroscopy lecture day, the Teaching Day and the FESSH 2025 Congress—was an outstanding professional and personal development opportunity. It offered hands-on exposure to rare and complex surgical cases, practical theoretical learning, and insight into multidisciplinary approach to hand surgery.

I highly recommend this program to any hand surgeon aiming to refine their expertise, gain insight into complex surgical techniques, and engage deeply with the international hand surgery community.



REPORT – MARIIA KOTOVA



From June 9 to June 28, 2025, I had the exceptional opportunity to take part in the FESSH Fellowship program, a truly enriching and transformative experience in my professional journey. During this three-week period, I visited two distinguished medical institutions in Finland: Helsinki University Hospital (HUS) and the Wellbeing Services County of Pirkanmaa (TAYS). These institutions are well known for their excellence in hand surgery, and my time there proved to be both educational and inspiring.

Throughout the fellowship, I had the privilege of closely observing a wide range of hand surgery procedures, from routine cases to highly complex reconstructive surgeries. In addition to observation, I was also able to actively participate in several operations, which provided me with valuable hands-on experience and allowed me to refine my surgical techniques under the guidance of expert surgeons.

One of the highlights of the program was attending a specialized wrist arthroscopy course. This intensive course significantly expanded my knowledge and technical skills in minimally invasive procedures, and I am confident that the insights I gained will positively impact my clinical practice moving forward.

Another important component of my fellowship was attending the FESSH 2025 Congress. The congress brought together leading specialists from across Europe and beyond, creating an inspiring environment for learning and exchange. I attended numerous thought-provoking lectures and interactive workshops, where the latest advancements and innovations in hand surgery were discussed. The scientific content, combined with opportunities for networking, made this congress an unforgettable experience.



What made this fellowship truly outstanding was the warm and welcoming atmosphere created by the staff at both hospitals. Their openness, professionalism, and willingness to share knowledge made me feel like a valued member of their teams. I am deeply grateful for their support and mentorship throughout the entire program.

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Overall, this fellowship has greatly deepened my understanding of hand surgery and reinforced my passion for continuous learning in this field. I return to my home institution with renewed motivation and new skills, eager to apply what I have learned and to continue growing as a specialist.



REPORT – AGATA DURDZINSKA TIMOTEO

I travelled with doctor Terry-Ann Curran and we have spent the first week in Turku and second in Jyvaskyla.

Turku was remarkable for excellent organization. We were given in advance clear instructions on when and where we should arrive and what is our schedule for each day. We were greeted by professor Markus Pääkkönen with a general presentation of finish history of hand surgery and organization of this specialty and training. We were then introduced to the doctors of Turku hospital and each day we followed a different surgeon on his/her's operation day. We were assigned to different doctors which helped us get the most of the experience. We had a chance to exchange with everyone in the team, see different approaches and operating manners also from the close up as we could scrub in. The highlights were pediatric hand surgery and musicians' clinic.



Jyvaskyla, on the other hand, was remarkable for all the opportunities we had to discuss research and clinical problems with professor Teemu Karjalainen. In this hospital we followed doctor Karjalainen for the whole week. He had made an effort to schedule interesting and varied cases for the week (unfortunately some patients didn't want to be operated on the week before Midsummer holiday and refused to be scheduled for the time of the fellowship). We could see some of basic hand surgery problems (diagnostic arthroscopy of the wrist, distal radius fracture) but also some high-end tailor-made surgery (capitellum plasty with osteocartilaginous rib graft). But most of all, some of the discussions we had with professor Karjalainen have profoundly changed the way I see research, publications and decision making in hand surgery.



But FESSH fellowship is not all about hand surgery but also about people, connections, culture, exchange and sharing. We had a wonderful finish experience in Turku where we were invited to doctor Heidi Vestamaki cabin at the see side, where we could share a meal, go to original finish sauna at the see shore and then dip in the cold see. We also had an incredible opportunity to be all invited to professor Karjalainen's house for the Midsummer weekend. We

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could then again experience a finish private and public sauna, swim in the lake, hike in the hills, kayak on the lake, pass the white night at the bonny fire and most importantly – connect, team build, exchange, get to know most of the other fellows. This possibility to stay together with other fellows made a major difference.

Any drawbacks? Well, yes. The biggest deception for me was the congress week. As the congress started on Wednesday afternoon, I expected we would have some program in the Helsinki hand team. It was not stated clearly before that there will be no clinical program there. The Tuesday lectures were not very useful. I would also appreciate to know in advance what are the working hours in Finland. As it differs largely from my country it would be useful for my organization to have this information.

All in all, I am really happy I could have been the part of this fellowship program and I would strongly recommend it to my younger colleagues. I am planning on visiting my co-fellows at their hospitals and hope to keep in touch with them for case discussions and socializing.

REPORT – FILIPPO PANTALEONI

The FESSH Congress Fellowship is one of the most prestigious awards given by the Federation of European Societies for Surgery of the Hand, and I had the privilege of living an unforgettable experience!

My Finnish journey began in the charming town of Jyväskylä, known for its iconic Alvar Aalto architecture and surrounded by endless forests. I was fortunate to share this adventure with my new friend Dr. Alfonso Prada from Madrid—an exceptionally skilled arthroscopist and hand surgeon... though not quite as talented when it comes to preparing spaghetti alla carbonara.

At Nova Hospital, a modern facility perfectly immersed in nature, I followed a full daily schedule under the guidance of Dr. Teemu Karjalainen, Head of the Hand Surgery Unit, and with the invaluable support of Dr. Toni Luukkala and Dr. Olli-Pekka Kangasniemi. The experience proved incredibly fruitful, both clinically and academically.



Image 1 – Alfonso Prada, Teemu Karjalainen and myself

I had the opportunity to observe and later discuss rare and challenging surgical cases, including the resection of an ulnar artery aneurysm located beneath the anterior interosseous nerve and the pronator teres muscle, a tendon graft from flexor superficialis to flexor profundus for an atraumatic lesion and the revision of a dorsal plate on the distal radius with associated carpal subluxation.

But the experience went beyond the operating room. We explored broader topics such as public healthcare and hospital organization in Finland, engaging in direct discussions about care models, sustainability, and the integration between research and clinical practice. Teemu impressed on all fronts: a top-tier surgeon, world-class researcher in clinical methodology and above all, an extraordinary human being. He welcomed all the fellows into

his home for the Midsummer holiday, organizing sporting events and truly Finnish experiences. That said, taking Teemu's outdoor advice too seriously had consequences: Alfonso and I got lost—twice—during an orienteering competition, risked our lives on a terrifying mountain bike trail and took the ultimate plunge into a 14°C lake after a sauna. The following week took place in Kuopio, under the supervision of three skilled hand surgeons: Dr. Matti Juntunen, Dr. Minna Lappalainen and Dr. Lauri Lindroos. We joined multiple surgical procedures and outpatient clinics, taking part in the discussion on rheumatoid hands, corrective osteotomies for distal radius malunions and osteosynthesis of metacarpal and phalangeal fractures.

We were warmly welcomed by the whole team and, in addition to expanding our surgical knowledge, we also dove into Finnish cuisine: we tasted the world-renowned kalakukko and the legendary paistetut muikut, both absolutely worth trying!

The fellowship concluded in Helsinki, at the European Congress of Hand Surgery, hosted in the famous Finlandia Talo—a masterpiece of harmony between architecture and nature. I had the honor of presenting “Long-term outcomes of proximal row carpectomy in patients under 45 years old, a minimum of 10-year follow-up”, carried out at the Department of Hand Surgery and Microsurgery in Modena, Italy, where I work. One of the most emotional moments was receiving the fellowship certificate directly from Prof. Jorma Ryhänen, Head of the Hand Surgery Department at the Helsinki University Hospital.



Image 2 – From left to right: myself and Prof. Jorma Ryhänen

The Congress Fellowship turned out to be a truly unique experience—not only technically and educationally, but also from a human and cultural perspective. The chance to exchange ideas, share experiences, and build connections with Finnish colleagues and other European fellows created an inspiring environment for future collaborations. I sincerely thank FESSH, the Finnish Society for Surgery of the Hand, and—most of all—every person I met during these three unforgettable weeks and I will cherish these friendships for years to come.

“Building art is a synthesis of life in materialised form. We should try to bring in under the same hat not a splintered way of thinking, but all in harmony together.” Alvar Aalto

REPORT – TAL FRENKEL RUTENBERG

My name is Tal Frenkel Rutenberg and I'm a hand surgeon from Israel. This year I was fortunate to be chosen to join the FESSH fellowship in Finland.

My three weeks in Finland were worthwhile. Finland is an amazing country, with breathtaking scenery, lakes, forests and islands. The people were all welcoming and traveling around was easy, despite my inability to even pronounce my destinations properly in Finnish 😊

My first week was in Tampere. My colleague Dr. Buga from Germany and I felt very welcomed. The department head Dr. Camilla Hellevuo, and the staff explained to us how the Finnish medical system works, both at the level of the physician and the training process, and at the level of the patient. We were given a tour of the hospital and joined the activity in the operating theatre. While most surgeries were similar to the ones we perform in my country, I did see for the first time arthroscopic-assisted scaphoid fracture fixation and scapholunate stabilization following perilunate dislocation.

My second week was in Helsinki. Once again, we felt very welcome by the staff and by Dr. Jorma Ryhänen who took us both on a tour of the hospital and the microsurgery lab and around the city. During this week I saw for the first time a Vascularized Medial Femoral Condyle Graft for scaphoid non-union. We were also invited to the department journal club that was conducted in English on our behalf.

For our last week, we participated in a dedicated teaching day, prior to the FESSH annual conference. Both were very educational and broadened our horizons, especially in the fields of the integration of AI into hand surgery.

I had a great time during my fellowship. I have met wonderful people who I hope will become lifelong friends and colleagues, enjoyed nature and expanded my knowledge and understanding of our wonderful profession.

Sincerely,
Dr. Tal Frenkel Rutenberg
Israel



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