

IOA EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

VISIT TO UK - MOORFIELDS EYE HOSPITAL

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INTRODUCTION

If I say, one of the pillars in the world of Ophthalmology is Orthoptics everyone would agree with the statement. Being a key member of an eye care team, we, Orthoptists, are fighting against the blindness and other causes of visual impairment mainly, strabismus, amblyopia, refractive errors and other common eye pathologies through screening, assessments, diagnosis, partly management and referral both at childhood as well as adult level. Apart from this we are involved in educational/teaching programmes to share skills, knowledge and experiences with other eye care professionals. This concept of sharing knowledge improves the quality of practice at individual level which may help to combat with the causes for childhood blindness and adult problems.

"Orthoptics gives me mental exercise and keeps my mind always thinking all the time," said by, *Dr. Shakil Ahmed*, one of my worthy and kind teachers. These words inspired me and provoked me to turn to this field with greater concentration and that's how I entered the world of Orthoptics. This determination eventually enabled me to claim with pride that today I finished my observation based attachment at Moorfields Eye Hospital, UK through IOA exchange programme, but it is just a beginning. Sky is the only limit for my passions and spirits for this field.

I'm, *Hamza Ali*, B.Sc. Hons. Orthoptics, graduated in January 2009 from College of Ophthalmology & Allied Vision Sciences (COAVS), King Edward Medical University, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan under the supervision of an excellent mentor *Prof. Dr. Asad Aslam Khan (Sitara-e-Imtiaz)*. COAVS also runs Optometry and Ophthalmic Technology courses apart from Orthoptics course. These are recently launched courses in Pakistan, which meet international standards, are offered on full-term academic schedules. These successful programmes are results of tireless efforts of *Prof. Dr. Asad Aslam Khan* for the establishment and development of Vision Science in Pakistan. He is the man behind the screen who made Pakistan capable enough to face the world of Vision and Allied Health Sciences with pride and dignity.

Soon after graduation, I've been serving Mayo Hospital/COAVS as an Orthoptist as a gesture of thanks to the institute which enlighten us with the depths of Orthoptics and I am loving real life experience. Within last couple of months I came to know about the International Orthoptic Association (IOA) and found it very valuable platform to unite with the rest of Orthoptic world, as its vision, mission and motives are really inspiring and encouraging. I feel very fortunate to get the opportunity to visit Moorfields

Eye Hospital, London, UK through IOA exchange programme soon after I joined IOA. This programme of IOA indeed fulfils its aims and objectives in true sense and I believe for the country like Pakistan where the Orthoptics is at its juvenile stage. This programme helps share knowledge, experience and expertise for establishment, standardisation and the development of Orthoptics. The experience I gained through this observation will be shared and discussed with my fellow colleagues and junior orthoptists to refine practices and improve standards to get full benefits of renowned research and valuable work done by Moorfields in this discipline.

ACTIVITIES AT MOORFIELDS

Before my arrival in London, I was very excited for this observation as keen to know my roster containing my rotations around different departments around Orthoptics. One of the reasons behind the attachment was to compare the methodologies followed for the assessments and management of the patients and above all Neuro-Ophthalmology was my primary area focus due to its less exposure at our faculty in Pakistan. Fortunately my schedule included participation in those clinics to have overview of this field and practical exposure to how to handle a patient complaining for the problems associating brain & neurology.

During my stay at Moorfields, I managed to observe large number of adult and paediatric patients and got the opportunity to learn through the experiences of consultants such as Dr. Gordon Plant, Dr. John Lee, Dr. Acheson and Prof. Chris. I had rotation in different departments, like;

- Botox/Toxin and Motility Clinic
- Adult and Paediatric Orthoptic Clinics
- Neuro-Ophthalmology Clinic
- Adnexal Clinic
- Adult and Paediatric Optometry Clinics
- Electrophysiology Department
- Genetic Clinic

I found everyone very kind, helping and supporting in explaining the cases before assessment, during assessment and while making patient management plan. Apart of common orthoptic complaints I had a chance to observe some patients with rare conditions and it was worth to go through their cases for benefit of my experience.

Through International Orthoptic Association, I'm really thankful to *Mrs. Chris Timms* and her team, who at Moorfields tried to arrange all available resources for me, which could help to enhance my learning, knowledge and clinical skills. I want to pay my special regards to those colleague orthoptists at Moorfields, Kelly, Despina, Mariam, Emma, Benita, Nabil, Vijay, kate, Hamida, Judy, Dipti, Chloe, Cynthia, Sharon and all others who helped me at every stage while I was there and made me feel as I'm a part of them. I really had a memorable time with all.

I also had an opportunity to see Mrs. Ann McIntyre and discussed with her current and future prospects and establishments for Orthoptics in Pakistan. We had detailed discussions on course/curriculum and syllabus structure which is being implemented for Orthoptics in Pakistan and she admired the quality of the programme. I really appreciate her keen interest and kind pieces of advice to establish national association in Pakistan.

I also enjoyed my time which I spent in the Institute of Ophthalmology attached to Moorfields Eye Hospital where I found informative, pioneering and knowledgeable books and manuscripts on Ophthalmology, different journals and links to latest research projects.

CONCLUSION

By the end of this wonderful practical experience I could feel the difference in myself which had seen practical aspects of the theory taught to us at our institute. I found Moorfields' quality for care and follow-up towards patients were excellent. When we'll embed great things from Moorfields in our practice, I'm sure it will make a difference in our practices at home and enhance the quality of care for the patients. Today, I'm feeling very proud that a pioneer in the world of eye care, "Moorfields" has been added in the list of my learning grounds. Indeed, I learnt a lot.

In the end, I would like to thank IOA, especially *Mrs. Elizabeth Canies* and *Mrs. Katherine J. Fray*, who organized this opportunity for me and made my ways easier to learn through IOA exchange programme. I am sure this will continue in future. It may help us share knowledge, ideas, practice and experience with each other which eventually may help us all to improve the attributes towards our clinical practices. I hope this bond between IOA and Pakistan will prove as a first step towards the horizon of successful establishment of Orthoptics and Pakistan would play its important role in the development of Orthoptics in future.

Sincerely,

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