

Fellowship Dates:

Start Date: September 2023

Finish Date: July 2024

I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to have completed the Knee Fellowship at the Leicester Knee unit. This program provided me with an unparalleled learning experience that has profoundly shaped both my clinical and academic skills in orthopaedic surgery, particularly in the management of knee pathology.

Pre-Fellowship Experience:

Before starting the fellowship, I had completed my orthopaedic training in the North West Deanery (England, UK) and knee fellowships in Sheffield and Bristol which provided me with a solid foundation in general orthopaedic and specifically knee surgery. However, I was eager to develop more experience in independent practice and this fellowship helped me to transition into consultancy. I am currently a Soft tissue Knee surgeon at Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Trust.

Clinical Mix of Fellowship:

The fellowship offered a well-rounded clinical experience that included:

- **Clinics:** I participated in regular clinics, where I assessed and treated a wide range of knee conditions, including acute injuries, chronic degenerative diseases, and post-operative care.
- **Theatres:** I gained extensive exposure to both routine and complex knee surgeries, performing a variety of procedures under supervision and independently.
- **Administrative Duties:** The program also provided insight into the administrative and organisational aspects of a high-functioning orthopaedic department, helping me develop a more comprehensive understanding of healthcare management.
- **Research:** I was actively involved in ongoing research projects, contributing to studies on Lateral extra-articular tenodesis and ACL rehabilitation.
- **Trauma:** Although the focus was on elective knee pathology, I was also exposed to traumatic knee injuries, which helped broaden my clinical experience in emergency and trauma settings.

Theatre Details:

- **Total Number of Cases:** I had the privilege of being involved in 297 surgeries during my fellowship, with 233 of those performed as the first surgeon i.e.78% .
- **Common Case Numbers:**
 - **Arthroplasties:** 83
 - **ACL Reconstructions:** 43
 - **Meniscus Repairs:** 22
- **Niche Operations:** I also had the opportunity to perform and assist in complex procedures, including:
 - Multi-ligament reconstructions: 4
 - Osteotomies: 15

Supervisor Insight and Quality of Training:

The mentorship I received during this fellowship was exceptional. My supervising consultants experience and guidance was invaluable. They not only provided expert surgical oversight but also emphasized a holistic approach to patient care, focusing on both surgical and non-surgical treatment options. The level of feedback and the opportunities to assist and perform procedures made the training highly personalised and impactful.

Overall Positives from the Fellowship:

- **Comprehensive Training:** The fellowship offered a diverse mix of cases, from routine arthroscopies to complex reconstructions, allowing me to develop a broad skill set.
- **Expert Mentorship:** The faculty were approachable and committed to my development, offering constructive feedback and fostering a collaborative learning environment.
- **Research Opportunities:** Being able to contribute to high-quality research.
- **Clinical Confidence:** I now feel confident in managing complex knee cases, and I have developed the skills to commence independent practice.
- **City and Unit Experience:** The opportunity to work in Leicester was a personal highlight, as it provided a vibrant environment that balanced professional growth with a high quality of life. The unit was well-organized, and I felt like an integral part of the team, both in the operating room and during patient care.

Overall Negatives from the Fellowship:

- **Administrative Load:** At times, the administrative tasks were overwhelming, particularly when balancing patient care with research commitments. However, this provided a valuable learning experience in time management and organisational skills.
- **Limited Exposure to certain niche areas:** While the fellowship was comprehensive, I would have appreciated more exposure to niche areas such as meniscal transplants but I believe this has now been commenced at Leicester and future fellows will certainly benefit from this.

Academic Element:

The fellowship provided a good academic exposure, including the opportunity to set up regional collaborative research projects and involve myself in quality improvement projects including revamping ACL rehabilitation. I was encouraged to engage in evidence-based practice, and the research opportunities were invaluable in advancing my knowledge in knee pathology and surgical techniques.

Personal Gain from the Unit and City:

Personally, I grew not only as a clinician but also as an individual. Living and working in Leicester allowed me to immerse myself in a new culture, making connections with colleagues, patients, and mentors who have become lifelong contacts. The professional camaraderie in the unit fostered an environment of continuous learning, which enhanced my overall fellowship experience.

In conclusion, the Leicester Knee Fellowship has been a defining period in my career. It has equipped me with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to provide the highest standard of care to my patients. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a prestigious program and would highly recommend it to anyone seeking to specialise in knee surgery.

Azhar Din