**SPINAL TIG FELLOWS REPORTS**

My name is Alex Goubran and I am one of the Orthopaedic trainees from the Southwest Peninsula deanery. I was privileged enough to be awarded one of the inaugural Spinal Trainee Interface Group fellowships or “STIG”s in 2020 I am due to commence my fellowship in Sheffield in February of 2021.

Application for the STIG was through an online portal run by Health Education England in the South West. This was advertised online, via the BASS web site and the NHS jobs web site. This application process involved detailed questioning on my previous experience, achievements, competencies and content of my CV. Questions also involved what the experience of such a fellowship would offer me as a trainee moving forward in my career as a Spinal surgeon. This application process took place approximately 2-3 months prior to the interview process.

Having been awarded an interview; this process took place at the Southwest Health Education England headquarters in Bristol. The interview itself took its form in several stations covering a variety of topics, competencies and question types. These were run by Consultant Orthopaedic and Neurosurgeons and questions asked varied from clinical situation and scenarios, the formulation of management plans for patients as well as far-reaching topics around improvement and development in Spinal surgery generally. There was also questioning about my progress, my CV and my own plans for the future and what I felt I could bring to the fellowship and how the fellowship could aid my own growth as a clinician and surgeon.

I prepared for the interview some weeks in advance to allow as much preparation as possible. I tried to ensure I had a close up-to-date understanding of the developments of surgical education in the UK as well as Spinal surgery in general. I ensured that I was well read with regards to recent spinal literature and up-to-date and popular topics such as the British Spine registry, ongoing multi centre Spinal research and the use of spinal implant. I had support in preparation from my Consultant body who thankfully gave me great advice, practice questioning and critiquing of my interview style as well as my CV and portfolio.

I spoke at length with my colleagues who wish to pursue a career in Hand surgery and had applied for, or undertaken the Hand surgery “TIG” fellowship with regards to preparation and the benefits of applying for such a fellowship. The STIG represents a fantastic opportunity to develop my own knowledge, technical ability, decision making and experience working around Spinal pathology to aid my path to becoming a Consultant Spinal Surgeon. Learning more about both adult and paediatric spinal pathology and its management with both Orthopaedic and Neurosurgical Consultants is a once in a career opportunity.

This is a JCST approved fellowship and has undergone a significant amount of development by the educational board that have shaped and designed it. It has a comprehensive and detailed plan with regards to with its syllabus and quality measures aiming to prepare the incumbents as best as possible to be a Junior Consultant Spinal Surgeon. This takes into account not only knowledge base and identification of core subjects but also development and improving confidence and competency in performing Spinal surgery.

As one of the first appointed such Fellows, we have been lucky enough to have been part of the process of development and improvement of this process. Inspecting and going through the aims of the fellowship as well as the quality markers; the commitment of the STIG education board to encourage our engagement in audit, research, quality improvement and further education is apparent. The obvious advantage of working under such comprehensive and well thought out educational markers laid out by Senior Spinal Consultant Surgeon means exploring spinal surgery in as much depth and breadth as is possible with all the support that we could ask for.

With the STIG fellowship still in its infancy, the board and consultant body involved are always looking for this process to evolve to improve it further as much as possible. This will mean opportunities and processes that we can develop over the years.

Centres have been asked to apply to house STIG Fellows and there is potential for these centres to increase in number with new centres applying all the time. I am undertaking my fellowship in Sheffield between the Northern General Hospital, Sheffield Children's Hospital and the Hallamshire Hospital. I will be learning under both adult and paediatric spinal surgeons with a background in both Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery. I will be using the guidance of the STIG syllabus and quality indicators, formulating the best educational and learning plan with my assigned educational and clinical supervisors. I am very excited by this prospect and believe this will give me the most solid foundations moving forward.