

The Urology Foundation

BY LOUISE DE WINTER

The Urology Foundation (TUF) is the only charity in the United Kingdom that raises money for research into all types of urological disease. Our ultimate aim as a charity is to discover the causes of urology cancers and conditions, to improve patient care and advance treatments developed from cutting-edge research. This is what we have been striving for throughout our 20-year history.

We all know that improving urology care has never been more important. One in two people will suffer from a urological condition of some kind during their lives, and urological cancers are becoming more common as the population ages.

It is for this reason that we invest both in research and in urology professionals. Wherever you work and in whichever field of urology you specialise, we are there to support research and provide you with the skills, training and development that you need to lead the fight against urology disease.

These are just some of the ways The Urology Foundation invests in urology professionals such as you.

Clinical visits

Whether you are a consultant urologist or a specialist registrar TUF can fund you to gain valuable experience by visiting a centre of excellence abroad, or indeed going to learn from a leading figure in your field.

We embrace the opportunity to send urology professionals to learn in other parts of the world, as observing colleagues in international centres of excellence is vital to returning to the UK with enhanced skills from which patients benefit. Pioneering techniques and technology is how this field advances, and sometimes going abroad to learn from established field-leaders is crucial in this endeavour.

Here are just a couple of examples of the type of clinical visits we fund.

In August 2014, funding from TUF enabled Oleg Tatarov to travel to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento,

California in advance of his consultancy post at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff.

It was there that he met Professor Anthony Stone, a world leading specialist in the field of reconstructive urology. He was able to observe various operative interventions such as specialist reconstructive procedures as well as core urological operations.

In addition to this, Oleg took part in a departmental grand round where he was invited to present his thoughts about upcoming operations for the next week. He was also able to attend informative teaching sessions and even presented to the trainees on the subject of post-prostatectomy incontinence. It is through the investment TUF made in Oleg that Welsh urology patients will benefit.

TUF also has a strong relationship with the Urology and Nephrology Center in Mansoura.

We have sent several urologists to study there as it is regarded as the best medical centre of its type in the Middle East and Africa. In just one month, the access to operations like cystectomies, bilateral pelvic lymphadenectomy and ileal conduit and orthotopic reconstruction is unmatched.

The number of different operations and opportunities to observe and learn are what sets clinical visits apart in value to patients back in the UK and Ireland.

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Seeing a wide variety of cases in parts of the world where particular conditions can be much more common is what improves care for all types of urological conditions here.

These two examples serve to demonstrate the ethos of TUF. If the visit has the potential to improve skills and practice and transform the quality of care, then we will do everything we can to support it.

Research programmes

As well as advancing the training and development of urology professionals, we also invest in laboratory-based research.

We offer annual Research Scholarships of up to £50,000 per annum. These scholarships can support a urological surgeon for up to three years of full-time scientific laboratory research into the diagnosis, causes and treatments of urology disease.

We don't discriminate between the branches of urology; we welcome any outstanding projects sent to us to be approved by our Scientific and Education Committee and our panel of experts who rigorously review each application sent to us.

One example of the type of work we fund is the research project completed by CJ Hillary from the Kroto Research Institute at The University of Sheffield. His aim was to find ways to improve the treatment given to patients with stress urinary incontinence (SUI) which affects as many as a third of women.

Currently, the most common treatment is the insertion of a mid-urethral sling; a polypropylene mesh strip placed below the mid-urethra preventing leakage during increased effort. While this kind of treatment has been relatively effective over time, it does suffer from some complications. Common side-effects of the treatment include erosion of tissues, painful intercourse and chronic pain. There are alternative treatments, but they also come with their downsides, like autologous grafts which rarely cause erosion but involve a more invasive procedure.

Mr Hillary therefore set out to develop tissue inductive bioactive materials for surgical repair of SUI using synthetic Estradiol, a human sex hormone and steroid. The results were very positive; it was found that Estradiol has a significant effect on both cell metabolic activity and collagen production at 14 days in vitro, without negatively impacting on the mechanical properties of the material. This could have meaningful implications for the initial healing phase following implantation of materials used to treat SUI.

This is the type of groundbreaking, pioneering work that we seek from our applicants that can produce a transformative effect on patient treatment in the future.

Small research projects funds

TUF is also able to provide up to £10,000 towards a project that seeks to improve services, treatments and communications between patients and carers. It can be awarded to both nurse-led and clinician-led projects.

The kind of project we welcome is one where the outcome of the study is measured and evaluated by the improvement of care and well-being of patients. As TUF is always driven by the needs of patients, we want to see that they are the primary focus of the work undertaken, and that the study findings could be easily disseminated across the urology community.

Educational training

We are aware, as ever, that one of the most important things for urology professionals is continued education and training.

We run a range of non-clinical courses to help professionals such as you with just these challenges.

You might be a specialist registrar, for example, who would like some advice for the all-important interview for a consultant post. We can offer skills-based training to develop your communication and presentation skills and interviewing ability, enabling you to make that leap between training and consultancy.

Alternatively, you might be a new consultant and you may now have a range of different responsibilities in addition to your medical practice. From team management to patient communications and leadership skills, becoming a consultant can throw up a number of challenges.

These skills are not taught as part of the current career development plan for urologists and so TUF fills in the gap, offering a variety of different courses aimed at helping professionals to progress in their careers.

In addition to educational training, we also offer travel grants. Attending courses and conferences specific to your field, both for urologists and urology nurses, is another important step in career development.

The Urology Foundation can provide you with £600 worth of funding if you can demonstrate that it would contribute to your own personal development, but also your department and thus the patients treated within it.

Being part of TUF

Our contact with you does not have to cease at the end of your project. We like to build relationships with everyone who has received funding from TUF, so that you can become an integral part of a charity that is there for all; both professionals and patients.

Many of those urology professionals that we have funded return the favour by fundraising for us, generating the funds that allow us to continue to support professionals at all stages of their career, from trainee all the way through to senior nurse or consultant.



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None declared.

