A personal review of the first Patellofemoral Travelling Fellowship

Karl Fredrik Almqvist
Dept. of Physical Medicine and Orthopaedic Surgery
Ghent University Hospital, Ghent University, B9000 Gent, Belgium.
fredrik.almqvist@rug.ac.be

The first Patellofemoral travelling fellowship supported by the Patellofemoral Study Group and ISAKOS took place in 2005.

I was lucky to be elected for this travelling fellowship and the two weeks’ travelling was divided into two parts:

one week in the United States and one week in Europe.

The first part started in Farmington/Hartford with John Fulkerson.

The first evening took place in a restaurant where I got to know Dr. and Mrs. Fulkerson a little better.

They offered me to stay at their home and the next day, a very snowy winterday, John Fulkerson took me to his clinic early in the morning where we had operations the whole day, such as 1/ arthroscopic debridement of the patella tendon for persistent patella tendonitis including an heightening of the patella through a tibial tuberosity osteotomy, 2/ a reconstruction of the medial patellofemoral ligament (MPFL), with a VMO advancement and an arthroscopic lateral release for patellar instability, and 3/ a Fulkerson osteotomy for patellofemoral (PF) instability with a shallow trochlea and cartilage damage of the inferior pole of the patella. Between the operations we had the time to discuss several PF problems such as the importance of the MPFL and not to overtighten it, the indications for the Fulkerson osteotomy, the advantage of visualising the tracking of the patella by arthroscopic visualisation after surgery. Trochleoplasty for the shallow trochlea is in the good indications a
good operative treatment in Johns’ eyes, though still has to get better known in the United States.

Afterwards we returned to John’s home where his wife Lynn had prepared a wonderful dinner with delicious vegetables from their own garden.

The second day in Farmington/Hartford I attended the consultations of John. People from all over the east coast and even furthering the US came to see him for different kinds of PF problems, from non-operated to multi-operated knees. The importance to strenuously palpate the knee with and to really locate the tender points was continuously stressed. Also the importance of a good conservative treatment including different kinds of orthotics, specific fisiotherapeutic managements and the success rate after the injection of hyaluronic acid in the most cases before performing any surgery was explained.

After the consultations John showed me his lab where the tracking of the patella in normal, in abnormal, and in operated knees is studied.

The same evening, John and me went for dinner in a local restaurant where the discussions over all kind of PF problems including the biological resurfacing of the patella were continued over some beers.

Early the next morning I took a flight to Washington not only attend a part of the Academy but also to join a Patellofemoral Study Group meeting where I met some good PF friends as Elizabeth Arendt and Scott Dye.

The second part of the fellowship was spent in Europe.

From Gent I took a train to London where Andrew Amis and his colleagues in the Mechanical Engineering Department – Biomechanics Group - of the Imperial College welcomed me. They invited me to visit their lab where cadaver knees were tested in several ways to study for patellofemoral movement and of knee kinematics.
There was also the time to discuss with Ulrich Hansen over his PF studies, including very interesting local PF sensor pressure meeting experiments.

The same day I took a train to Bristol where Mr. Chris Ackroyd welcomed me. The first evening we went to a meeting in the Avon Clinic were Dr. Laskin from the HSS-clinic, NY, was invited to give a lecture over TKA. This was followed by a dinner at Chris Ackroyds’ home with his wife Alexandra, and with Mr. Eldridge and his wife. The second day we performed operations. I assisted a high tibial opening osteotomy and a unicompartmental knee prosthesis. Several patellofemoral problems were approached and a variety of knee problems were discussed. In the afternoon, over a cup of tea, we had a brainstorming over the indications and long-term results of the Avon PF prosthesis.

The day after I took a plane to Lyon where I was welcomed by Dr. David Dejour who brought me to Lyon center. In the evening a dinner was organized with Prof. Dr. Philippe Neyret and his colleagues in a typical restaurant of Lyon. The first morning in Lyon I assisted in the operations of Michel Bonnin. Six prostheses were placed at a very high but professional tempo. In the afternoon a very learningfull session was organised with Prof. Dr. Ph. Neyret where different types of patellofemoral problems were approached. Everything that could be learnt from a conventional X-ray, and when to perform a trochleoplasty, a proximal or a distal realignment were in the smallest details explained by Philippe Neyret. The importance of the “facteurs majeures” and the existence of the “facteurs d’ambiance” in PF instability was given. You really feel that Lyon and its school is a basis for the PF joint. The evening was spent at the home of Dr. Tarik Aït Si Selmi and his wife. The day after Dr. David Dejour picked me up at the hotel for operations in his clinic.
A TKA, an ACL reconstruction with dubbel femoral tunnels, and an arthroscopy for a meniscal problem was scheduled.

Afterwards we had lunch together in the center of Lyon and then a plane took me home to Gent.

What I have learnt during this patellofemoral travelling fellowship is that problems of this joint in different countries are approached in several ways and that surgery is certainly not always necessary. The interest for me in this joint only has increased after thes 2 weeks of travelling, and hopefully some interesting studies of this PF joint could be set up in the Ghent University in the near future. I still want to thank all the people involved in this patellofemoral travelling fellowship including all the hosts and especially the Patellofemoral Study Group, the ISAKOS organisation, Dr. John Fulkerson and Prof. Dr. Philippe Neyret.