

A Report from Hugh Greenway's 31st Annual Course on Superficial Anatomy and Cutaneous Surgery, July 2014

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Åsa Ingvar attended the above-mentioned course which was full of great opportunities for efficient learning. She encourage her colleagues to apply for future courses.

In July 2014 I had the great privilege to attend the Superficial Anatomy and Cutaneous Surgery course in La Jolla, San Diego. This was made possible by the generous scholarship issued by the Section for Dermatologic Surgery and Oncology (SDKO) in collaboration with Almirall, Galderma, La Roche-Posay, Leo Pharma, MEDA, and Roche. This ambitious 5-day course, with program from 7:30 am to 9:30 pm, consisted of lectures, workshops, and laboratory and board review sessions. In this report I will try to provide a vivid description!

After a long flight to San Diego, seated between a married American couple, I arrived in San Diego together with two colleagues from Sweden, Bertil Persson from Lund and Ingela Ahnslide from Helsingborg (Fig. 1). We had had the same idea, namely to arrive one day early to have time to acclimatize to the time difference. This first day we spent doing some sight-seeing and exploring the shopping culture at outlets. We had great fun and it was good to have met some friends to share this experience with and to be able to exchange thoughts and ideas with during the course.



Fig. 1. Ingela Ahnslide, Helsingborg and Bertil Persson, Lund.

The first day consisted of only lectures. In the morning we had a really good review of superficial head- and neck anatomy. We were taught practical rules of thumb to for example find nerves to either achieve a successful nerve block or to avoid nerve damage. During the day a complete walkthrough of basic surgical lectures was also presented, including topics such as haemostasis, wound management, suturing techniques, local anaesthesia, antibiotics and anticoagulants. There was also a lecture on surgical drawing that opened up new perspectives for me. Firstly, I realized that perhaps also I and other dermatologic surgeons in Sweden should commit some time and energy to explain to the patients how the surgery will be performed and make sure that the expectations on the outcome are realistic. Secondly, I was reminded for the first time during this week how important it is for doctors in the USA to have an excessively friendly relationship with their patients when the lecturer repeatedly stressed that the outer angle of the eyes should be drawn 10 degrees above the inner angle of the eye to make the patient look young on the surgical drawing (Fig. 2).

The next day the lectures began to get very interesting and useful. We had reviews on skin grafting, Z-plasty, repairs on the nose and periorally and management of scars and keloids. We were taught a systematic way to go about repairs of the face which I found very helpful: 1) start by identifying dangerous structures and "free margins" (structures of the face that can easily be distorted such as eye lids), 2) continue by marking the "resting skin lines" and "cosmetic units" (which you want to stay within), and lastly, 3) identify the skin reservoir that can be advanced to fill the defect. Of course, the most exciting happening during this day was the introduction of the laboratory sessions. We were transported to the UC San Diego Lab by bus and walked to a room where around 18 cadavers had been prepared for us. We were divided into groups of 5–6 participants and each group had a tutor. The cadavers were treated respectfully while we worked with the different lab goals. Besides identifying important nerves on the face and neck we mostly practiced different plastys, flaps and suturing techniques. The labs offered an opportunity for efficient

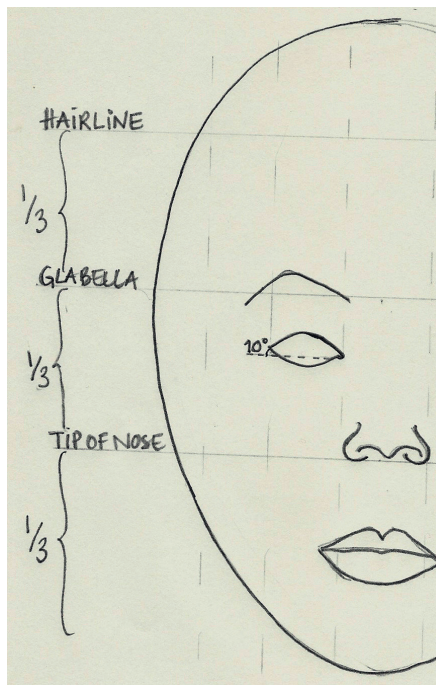


Fig. 2. Surgical drawing showing how the outer angle of the eyes should be drawn 10 degrees above the inner angle of the eye to make the patient look young.

learning, although I have to admit that they at times were a little overwhelming.

On the following day more lectures were offered on different repairs for different locations of the face such as the nose and the ear. There were also more time in the lab and we had a “problem solving session” for the second time. I found these sessions brilliant! With a simple set-up the faculty managed

to augment the learning enormously. A picture of a facial defect after Moh's surgery was projected on a white paper and the students (10 per group) were asked to suggest a repair after going through the algorithm that we had learnt the day before (dangerous structures and free margins, resting skin lines and cosmetic units, skin reservoir). Interesting discussions emanated from these cases and of course it became clear that a single defect can be repaired in a number of ways, from complex myocutaneous flaps to second intention healing. During the day there was also a couple of talks on cosmetic topics such as botulinum toxin and the anatomy of the ageing face and it was clear that most dermatologists in the United States perform different cosmetic procedures and cosmetic dermatology is even included in their board exams. In the evening there was a lovely dinner at the Stephen Birch aquarium where we, among other things, saw the most spectacular sea horses!

The last two days consisted of more of the same. There were very nice lectures on anatomy and special considerations when performing surgery on and around the eyelids, and on the hands and nails. There was also a lecture on medical legal aspects of dermatologic surgery and I think it was during this day we were advised to always call the patients in the evening that had had surgery during the day. The same lecturer said “You should always make sure that the patients have your private number” which was somewhat alien to the European physicians in the group but perhaps this will be more common in the future in Scandinavia?

Lastly I would like to sincerely thank the Swedish Society of Surgery and Oncology and the Dermatology clinic at Karolinska University Hospital for the wonderful opportunity to attend this course and acquire new knowledge, experience, friends and a new point of view; the American point of view.