

## Bursary Award – Skills I have gained and how I will use them in my practise. (1)

### BAHT Level II- The PIP Joint,

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, Oxford 13-15 May, 2009

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The BAHT Level II course on the PIP joint was a three day course presented by N.E.S. Hand Therapy Training team. The course was very enjoyable and stimulating and I am grateful to BAHT for offering the funding to enable me to attend the course.

I have been working part time as a hand therapist (PT), for a number of years and have recently moved to a smaller hospital where the majority of hand therapy is for a mixture of elective hand surgery and trauma. My previous experience has been treatment for a range of orthopaedic and trauma problems. In deciding how to improve my knowledge, the PIP joint course appeared to have the potential to fill in some gaps and strengthen my knowledge, which I feel it succeeded in.

The course itself consolidated and simplified the anatomy of the PIP joint and surrounding tissues and then applied this to the mechanics. This was taught in a very clear and interesting way, clarifying areas which I had previously struggled to grasp. Part of the course involved some interactive workshops which provided a good forum for discussion and a valuable chance to learn from other hand therapists' experiences.

The course progressed from looking at the mechanics of a normal PIP joint to the altered mechanics and instability which can occur through injury, disease, conditions and secondary problems. This was linked with specific assessments of structures around the joint to obtain a diagnosis. Discussion then progressed with clinical reasoning for designing an appropriate treatment plan and setting realistic and appropriate goals with the patient. The emphasis was on clinical reasoning appropriate to the particular needs of the patient and not preconceived 'recipes' for treatment. In the afternoon of the last day, case studies were discussed in groups and then all together. This again provided an opportunity to hear about a range of clinical experiences and treatment approaches, some of which can be brought into my current practice.

I am now able to use this specific knowledge in my current post since it has direct relevance for most of the patients I treat. The course has raised a number of questions I am interested to discuss with the hand surgeons and hand therapists with whom I work. Since the department I work in is small, it is also reassuring to find that the practices we use are up to date and in line with other departments. While the department in which I work has extensive guidelines for treatment, some interesting points came up through both the lectures and group workshops which I would like to discuss with senior staff. I will have the opportunity to give a presentation to the department about the course and with other hand therapists in the local area. The course has also given me ideas which I would like to take further for the Level III BAHT course.

Finally, the course was very enjoyable and not only have I been able to expand my theoretical knowledge but have also deepened my understanding which I feel can refine my clinical practice and skills. I would recommend the course to anyone working in hand therapy.

(525 words)