**Bursary Report for the British Association of Hand Therapists**

**[Elaine Morris]**

**[Surgery and Therapy Management of Flexor and Extensor Tendon Injuries to the Hand]**

**[19th, 20th & 21st September 2019]**

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| **Introduction:**  I am an occupational therapist working in hand therapy within the NHS. I have previously completed my BAHT level I course and one other Level II course. The majority of our patients are referred from plastics trauma with a large percentage of those having had tendon repairs. I was therefore very excited to attend this specific course, to get a greater understanding of tendon management from a surgical point of view and to also review our current practice and rehabilitation protocols against other departments. |
| **Topic:**  The course was run over three days by different speakers from both surgical and therapy backgrounds. It was hosted at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham and was made up of both lectures and practical workshops.  The first day focused on extensor tendons. Lectures covered different topics including extensor tendon anatomy, clinical assessment of extensor tendons, surgical & therapy management of extensor tendons and finished with group workshops. I found the lectures very clear and informative. The speakers throughout the day were extremely knowledgeable and very happy to answer any questions. I found it very interesting to learn about the different approaches that therapists from all over the UK use to treat tendon repairs and to learn the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. I found that the group discussions allowed therapists to share different ideas and management strategies for complications associated with extensor tendons. Prior to attending this course, I found that much of the research available focused on the management of flexor tendon injuries and it was therefore extremely useful to spend time on the topic of extensors. I now feel confident that I have improved my problem solving & clinical reasoning skills to help me better manage and treat patients with extensor tendon injuries.  Our second day covered a similar pattern of lectures and workshops but focused instead on flexor tendon repairs. We first reviewed the complex anatomy associated with flexor tendons including the zones of injury, mechanisms of injury and how to clinically assess the different structures. We learned about the many different types of surgical repairs and even had the opportunity to practice a flexor tendon repair to an animal tendon. This provided an excellent insight into the strength of repairs for work of flexion. Additionally, I feel this will be useful for me when reading operation notes and guiding patients through a safe range of movement. As part of my job role, we often treat complex combined injuries which involve tendon repairs alongside nerve injuries and fractures. I found the lecture focusing on combined injuries by one of the hand surgeons very interesting. We learned about bone stability post fracture repairs, challenges associated with nerve injuries and the impact of scarring on function and outcome. Therapy techniques focusing on the management of these complex injuries was also covered in detail on our final day and these are aspects I will now consider more carefully in my treatment plans.    Our final day involved discussions around patient education and adherence with therapy. We learned there are many barriers in this regard. We also learned there are many different ways we can try to alter our practice and overcome these barriers in order to achieve the best possible outcome for our patients. We had a practical splinting session in which we had the opportunity to fabricate different splints used to treat flexor and extensor tendon injuries. This was a great learning experience as everyone had different techniques and tips to ensure comfortable and fit for purpose splints.  I am extremely grateful to BAHT for the bursary and opportunity to attend this very useful and informative course. I aim to share the knowledge and skills I have gained from this course with my team to improve our future practice. |