

# **Alan Gordon BSGE Travelling Fellowship Report**

**May 2023**

I have successfully completed the Level 2 ISON Course of the International Society of Neuropelveology and I am very grateful to the BSGE for awarding me the Alan Gordon Fellowship in support of my effort. My aim has been to acquire the necessary knowledge and training to further develop a Neuropelveology service at St. Peter's hospital, in Chertsey.

The course consists of two parts (Level 1 and Level 2) and has been developed by Professor Marc Possover, who has pioneered the field of Neuropelveology. Level 1 provides the knowledge base. This required approximately two months of personal study to review the anatomy of pelvic nerves, their function, disease and dysfunction and successfully sitting an online exam. To achieve Level 2, I had the pleasure of spending three days close to Professor Possover at his clinic in Zurich, Switzerland. Our team of delegates included internationally acknowledged gynaecology surgeons from the UK, Germany, UAE, Austria as well as a neurosurgeon. I had therefore the chance to learn not only from Marc, but also from other very experienced colleagues who lead in their fields in their countries.

The course included three intense days of:

- lectures and discussions on neuropelveology and its far reaching applications
- mock cases and practicing on differential diagnosis via group discussion
- mastering the technique of neuropelveology examination
- joining Marc in theatre for a live LION procedure on a paraplegic patient (LION - Laparoscopic Implantation Of Neuroprosthesis)
- Travelling to Bern to practice nerve dissection and anatomy on fresh human cadavers
- A lovely dinner in the good company of Marc and all colleagues

Neuropelveology has several applications:

Endometriosis of the pelvic nerves is a rare disorder and may be isolated (for example isolated endometriosis of the sciatic nerve) or manifest as extension of pelvic endometriosis, such as deep pelvic sidewall disease involving the obturator nerve or posterior compartment disease reaching the sacral nerve routes.

Neuralgia and chronic pain due to irritation or damage to a nerve as a result of a previous surgical procedure, obstetric trauma, or vascular nerve compression, can be diagnosed and alleviated by laparoscopic surgical exploration, or pharmaceutical blockade of the nerve. A neuropelveological assessment of the clinical presentation through the history and examination of the patient are paramount in establishing the correct diagnosis and providing appropriate treatment.

Neuromodulation, the alteration of nerve activity by delivering electrical stimulation directly to a nerve or nerve bundle can improve quality of life for a number of conditions, including bladder dysfunction, sexual dysfunction, chronic pain, spinal cord injury. Marc's

work spans over several decades and has shown that the LION procedure (direct stimulation of pelvic somatic nerves by laparoscopic implantation of multi-polar electrodes) leads to recovery of a voluntary, electrically assisted walking motion in approximately 70% of patients with chronic complete or incomplete spinal cord injury. The procedure has been recently gaining ground and advocates as one of the few options which can provide realistic and measurable improvement in the quality of life of people with paralysis from spinal cord injury.

Last but not least, I must mention that knowing the neuroanatomy of the pelvis will enable me to identify pelvic nerves during deep dissection and spare them whenever possible, i.e. to incorporate nerve-sparing techniques in my daily surgical practice.

Overall, through this course, I have acquired new skills and knowledge in pelvic neuroanatomy and neuro-function which will have direct application to my clinical practice. A service which incorporates neuropelveology within the tertiary management of complex endometriosis, is required in the NHS. I believe that St. Peter's is a suitable place for such a service, given the extensive experience which we have built in endometriosis, over the last 3 decades and over several generations of endometriosis surgeons, each of us supporting and learning from each other. I will now work closely with my colleagues and management to ensure that this service flourishes.

Once more, many thanks to the BSGE for supporting me.



**Vasileios Minas, PhD, MRCOG**  
**Consultant Gynaecologist and Endometriosis Specialist**  
**St. Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, UK**