

Star of India

The First MClinDent (prosthodontics) Residential Week in India, February 4–10, 2006

Michael Austin gives an account of the first MClinDent (prosthodontics) residential week in India, February 4–10, 2006

In February this year, seven first year students taking the innovative virtual learning environment (VLE) master's degree course from Kings College, London, joined up with 18 MDS students from the SDM Dental College, Dharwad, India for a combined residential/master class week. The venture was a first in many ways. The visit inaugurated the Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Dental College, India's only five star dental school and part of a private charitable organisation, as a residential centre for the MClinDent (prosthodontics) course, complementing the Salomon's Centre, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, which held a similar course two weeks before attended by 28 other first year students. The students travelling to India were each awarded a £1000 bursary by King's College, London in support of this new venture.

A smooth and comfortable flight from Heathrow to Bangalore touched down on time to the minute. This route to India's 'Silicon Valley' had only started in October and takes about eight and a half hours direct. Not so comfortable, nor so prompt was the one and a half hour local flight from Bangalore to Hubli, a regional hub, in the smallest plane most of us had ever travelled in, passing operational DC-3s of the Indian Air Force! Our destination was the leafy university town of Dharwad, adjacent to Hubli

in a rural part of India off the beaten tourist track. It is, however, close to Goa for those who want to extend their stay by the coast.

The course was given by a dynamic team from King's College, comprising course director Brian Millar, Nicolas Hodson, Brett Robinson and MClinDent grandaunt Subir Banaji. It combined elements of the foundations of prosthodontics, such as occlusion, treatment planning, soft tissue management, periodontology, aesthetics and endodontics, with the tools required for taking the online course, such as critical appraisal of, and online database searches for published papers, and still and video dental photography. The MClinDent students were given an interactive CD Rom and flash drive for storing assignments.

The online course material is the academic keystone of the programme, using the latest interactive software and containing the first three study modules, namely 'Introduction to fixed and removable prosthodontics', 'Treatment planning and preparation of the mouth' and 'Complete dentures'. The clinical subjects were supplemented by hands on workshops in the Postgraduate clinic of the Dental College. Here, in the all Indian equipped department with floors and walls of the finest vitreous tiles, the Kings College students worked together in teams with the Indian MDS students, both sides benefiting from the interchange of different skills and experience.

The Indian dentists scored heavily on practical laboratory expertise, having to do all their own laboratory work in the adjacent German equipped postgraduate laboratories. They also had vastly greater exposure to maxillary facial and oral surgery as the incidence of road traffic trauma, oral cancer and cleft palate are far higher than in Europe. The evidence for the former was witnessed daily as we drove from our hotel to the College.

The very informal teaching style of the King's staff was a novelty for the Indian MDS students and it was probably the first time that they had seen a demonstration of electrosurgery carried out on a



SDM Dental College, Dharwad, India, showing ventilated concrete construction for cooling in the heat of summer.

SPECIAL ARTICLE



Happy students chilling out in Pizza Hut, downtown Hubli, Karnataka State, India



Demonstration of bite registration in the Graduate Prosthodontics Clinic, SDM Dental College and Hospital

dead animal's jaw (in this case a goat). It was, therefore, not quite so bizarre for the MClindent students to have a seminar on cross infection control by the hotel poolside in a temperature of about 30 degrees centigrade!

The social side of the trip was not neglected, with two Indian banquets and a dinner hosted by a local magnate in his house. By the end of the week international relations had truly been cemented and business cards and e-mail addresses exchanged. We were reminded what a great privilege it is to belong to a profession that transcends four continents and look forward to the next four years of study and two more residential courses.

This degree programme will give you new skills, bring you up to date, enable you to meet new friends, and have your interest in dentistry revitalized. Further information on the distance learning MClindent and MSc courses can be obtained from www.londonexternal.ac.uk or by email to m.clindent@kcl.ac.uk
Enjoy!

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