

Endodontic Externship in California

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On commencing my Specialist Registrar training in Restorative Dentistry at Guy's Dental hospital in January 2006, I realized that it had been five years since I had carried out any specialist level endodontic treatment. I quickly realized that a lot had changed with the widespread use of microscopes, nickel titanium rotary instruments and advances in warm vertical condensation techniques. I was keen to develop new competences as soon as possible in my structured training package. I discussed these possibilities with my academic supervisor and the possibility of undertaking a sabbatical to the United States.

The Endodontic Department at Loma Linda University is renowned for its evidence based approach to endodontics as well as the development of Mineral Trioxide Aggregate. I approached Professor Torabinejad at Loma Linda and he suggested that to develop my endodontic skills it would be useful for me to visit for 5 weeks as part of the first year residents pre-clinical course. I arrived at Los Angeles airport in early July with my belongings and as many extracted teeth as I could muster. Fortunately no one at customs queried exactly what I was doing with these teeth, and why my suitcase was giving off an aroma of formalin!

Loma Linda University is located South East of Los Angeles and is a Seventh Day Adventist Teaching Hospital, with a large medical and Dental School. On my first day of the course I met up with the three first year residents. All were Loma Linda graduates and had spent three years in the military after graduation. Interestingly they were paying fees of \$80,000 US dollars per annum, as well as having to purchase their own equipment

The course consisted of numerous lectures on the theory and practice of endodontics with a variety of lectures from faculty members and visiting lecturers. We also spent time in the laboratory trying out a variety of techniques on extracted teeth. The laboratory was set up with microscope, digital x ray facilities and equipment to carry out all types of rotary instrument techniques and warm gutta percha obturation techniques. The clinics were set up with a microscope for each student and a digital radiograph facility at each chair. The patients seen by the undergraduates and post graduates were mainly covered by state health insurance. The fees for molar endodontics carried out by the students started at £300 for a molar tooth and another £200 for the crown. This gives some insight into the charges in private practice, given that many patients were more than happy to pay this much reduced fee if treated by a student.

In summary my trip to Loma Linda fulfilled all my educational needs. Our treatment philosophy and use of technology matched that of our American colleagues in many respects, though it was interesting to observe and experience slight differences in methodology and rationale for treatment throughout my visit.

I am extremely grateful to the ACSRD, SRRDG and Trustees of the TC White bequest fund (RCPS Glasgow) for assisting me in making this trip, which has enhanced not only my knowledge base and clinical skills, but also led to a greater understanding of a different educational model to our own.