

The Rowan Nicks *legacy*

Rowan Nicks scholars throughout Australia have been given great opportunities to gain key skills in their field, here a few reflect on their time. The commitment of Mr Rowan Nicks to expanding medical expertise and services to underdeveloped nations as well as forging links between Australasia, England and Ireland has now seen more than 50 international surgeons visit Australia through funding provided by the scholarships and Fellowships endowed by him following

his years teaching and working in Africa, India and South-East Asia. The scholarships, established in 1991, provide opportunities for young surgeons who show surgical ability and leadership qualities to learn skills alongside Australasian surgeons before returning to their communities to develop and promote this knowledge. In honour of his great and lasting contribution to surgery around the globe, *Surgical News* spoke to three current Rowan Nicks Scholars

Dr Ramesh Singh Bhandari: General Surgeon, Nepal. Rowan Nicks International Scholarship recipient.

Why did you wish to come to Australia to work and study?

As the super-specialty training in the fields of medicine and surgery are very limited and do not reach the standards of the developed world, once we complete our postgraduate training in Nepal, we always wish to pursue our higher training abroad. Because of its highly advanced surgical and medical field, Australia has long been one of the top ranked destinations for us to get higher training.

When did you arrive and where have you been working?

I started my training in October last year at the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne. I am attached to the Hepatobiliary Pancreatic Surgery Unit. From July, I will be working at the Austin Hospital, Department of Hepatobiliary Surgery.



What new skills or knowledge have you gained?

In the months of my training at the Alfred Hospital, I have gained huge experience in the field of hepatobiliary surgery. Gaining

skills in pancreatic and liver surgery and their perioperative management have been the most rewarding part of my learning. I have also been able to take part in the departmental academic activities and data-research work.



Dr Bibhusal Thapa: Thoracic Surgeon, Nepal. Rowan Nicks International Scholarship recipient.

Why did you wish to come to Australia to work and study?

I have always known Australia to be a top notch place for training in advanced surgery. I

was convinced I would get the best of training here in my field of interest.

When did you arrive and where have you been working?

I came here in July, 2010, and have been working in the Thoracic Surgical Unit at the Austin Hospital, Melbourne.

What new skills have you gained?

I came here to learn Thoracoscopic surgery and I have managed to achieve most of that goal. In addition I have also been able to familiarise myself with newer techniques of therapeutic bronchoscopy, laser treatment and Endobronchial ultrasound. The most important achievement, however, has been the new and broader vision of my subject that I have acquired here.

How will this impact upon your work at home and the care of your patients?

I am hoping to introduce the field of thoracoscopy at home in Nepal. I shall also be taking with me a very new approach to managing and treating thoracic patients.

Have particular surgeons in Australia acted as mentors?

Mr Simon Knight, Director of the Thoracic Surgical Service at the Austin Hospital has been my mentor throughout my training. However, I have also learned a great deal from Mr Siven Seevanayagam, Mr Julian Gooi and Mr Stephen Barnett.

What has been the highlight of your stay so far?

Everything I have experienced while in

How will this impact upon your work at home and the care of your patients?

I am very confident that once I go back to my country there will be many things that I can improve, not just limited to hepatobiliary surgery. At the Austin Hospital I am expecting to get some exposure in liver transplantation and will try to work out whether in the long run in my country, it will be feasible or not for us to dedicate ourselves to starting such a liver transplantation program.

Have particular surgeons in Australia acted as mentors?

Association Professor Peter Nottle, head UGIS unit and Mr Peter Evans, Head of Hepatobiliary surgery have been my supervisors at the Alfred Hospital. Professor Chris Christophi will be my supervisor at the Austin Hospital.

What has been the highlight of your stay so far?

To date, my time in Australia has been excellent in all aspects. I feel that I am being prepared to become a surgical leader, both as clinician and teacher who will be able to develop the field of HPB surgery in Nepal.

What do you think of Rowan Nicks' legacy and generosity in endowing such scholarships?

I think of myself as having been extremely lucky to have received this scholarship and I consider Mr Nicks to have been a truly great human being.

Australia has been delightful. The warmth and feeling of being welcome and well looked after has been exceptional, however, the highlight surely has to be the brief, but wonderful meeting with Mr Rowan Nicks earlier this year. The personality of the man just stunned me.

What do you think of Rowan Nicks' legacy and generosity in endowing such scholarships?

I was deeply saddened by his passing away. His contribution to training surgeons from all over the world speaks volumes about his great vision. He will be remembered as someone who not only served humanity all his life, but also showed others through his generosity the same path.



Dr Iain Whitaker: Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeon, England. Rowan Nicks UK and Republic of Ireland Fellowship recipient.

Why did you wish to come to Australia to work and study?

Melbourne has a world class reputation for Plastic and Reconstructive surgery research and clinical practice. The Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Taylor Laboratory are the current home to individuals at the forefront of plastic surgery research.

When did you arrive and where have you been working?

I arrived in January this year and have so far been working in a clinical capacity at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and Francis Perry House, Mercy Private Hospital and St Vincent's and the Western Hospital. My research experience has been at the Taylor Laboratory, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, University of Melbourne.

What new skills or knowledge have you gained?

I have gained significant additional clinical experience in microsurgery and new skills in performing cadaveric studies, teaching, supervising research students and laboratory management.

How will this impact upon your work at home and the care of your patients?

The overall experience will have a significant impact on my future practice. On return to the UK, I will be setting up a dedicated plastic surgery research unit and the experience and mentorship by Mark Ashton and Ian Taylor will be crucial in allowing me to do this successfully.

Have particular surgeons in Australia been of assistance?

I must thank Mr John Masterton,

Chair of the Rowan Nicks' Scholarship committee for giving me the opportunity to work in Australia. I have rarely met such a humble and kind yet intelligent and decorated individual. As an overall mentor in all aspects of the fellowship, in my opinion Mark Ashton has been a perfect example of the teacher that Rowan Nicks envisaged. I must also thank Professor Ian Taylor and Mr Russell Corlett for embracing me into the Taylor Lab family and being such insightful researchers and individuals. Damien Grinsell has been very supportive and important in expanding my clinical experience in microsurgery and Mr Felix Behan has been a great educator and supporter.

What has been the highlight of your stay so far?

In the clinical arena, the high volume microsurgical experience has been invaluable. The submission of innovative NHMRC grants in collaboration with Mark Ashton in parallel with anatomical studies with Ian Taylor and Mark Ashton have been wonderful opportunities.

What do you think of Rowan Nicks' legacy and generosity in endowing such scholarships?

I am very upset not to have had the chance to meet Mr Nicks. I was planning to visit Sydney on my return from a European Conference as I desperately wanted to shake his hand and thank him for the opportunity he has given to so many surgeons worldwide. It would be difficult to imagine how many lives he has positively affected by his actions and vision, but he must have touched every corner of the globe. In my opinion there is no greater legacy an individual can leave than he has.