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CAREER MENTORSHIP FOR YOUNG NEUROLOGISTS IN EUROPE

Certain clinical insights cannot be bestowed by textbook. At the EFNS annual meeting in 2011, 60 young European neurologists gathered to listen to Professors Wolfgang Oertel, Gunhild Waldermar, and Ray Chaudhuri, whose views about foreign exchanges, styles of clinical practice, and working with other specialists are likely to be invaluable to young neurologists throughout Europe.

Background. The European Association of Young Neurologists and Trainees (EAYNT) is an independent nonprofit organization that was founded in 1999 to promote collaboration and friendship among young European neurologists. Over the last 10 years a number of initiatives have been developed to improve education and clinical experience for young neurologists,¹ especially for those in training. The EAYNT has prominent representation at the EFNS meetings and in particular the annual Special Session, a program of lectures at the EFNS that aims to enlighten young neurologists with alternative perspectives about the practice of neurology. Currently little is known about training curricula in Europe.²

At the 2011 meeting in Budapest, a collective view was reached among EAYNT members that that year's EFNS special session was particularly instructive and inspiring and that the content should be published and shared. We are very much indebted to our guest speakers and mentors Professor Oertel from Germany, Professor Waldermar from Denmark, and Professor Chaudhuri from the United Kingdom for their advice.

Foreign exchanges. The EAYNT strongly supports exchanges within neurology departments in Europe. A recent workshop at the ENS in May 2011 entitled "Pimp up your residency"³ promoted the educational

and personal benefits of undertaking a foreign exchange. It also provided funding advice.

Professor Oertel now provides us with a much more detailed and structured approach to organizing an exchange with his *Guide Through the Galaxy of European Departments of Neurology* (table 1). It aims to help you to define your goals, your environment, and your time scales in as precise and realistic a way as possible.

The first step is to consider carefully your own personal motivations for undertaking an exchange. Do you seek to escape your regular clinical duties? Do you want to meet a new partner? Have you romantic aspirations of living in Spain? Be honest with yourself and make decisions that will satisfy these aspirations.

Next consider language. This is an extremely important factor for clinical, scientific, and social interaction as well as clinical safety. In the decade of "impersonal" electronic communication, a profound language skill is the key to making friends in a foreign environment.

Assess critically the quality of your own language skills. This may determine what role you go for. If you aim to improve clinical skills or practice in any capacity that involves direct contact with the patient, you should possess more than a basic command of the language spoken in your host country. Do not start speaking English, as this is the enemy of any chance to learn the language of your host country. If your goal is basic neuroscientific research in the laboratory, most members of the academic staff are able to communicate in English. By avoiding the challenge of learning the local language you will miss a tremendous amount of subtle communication and social interaction with the nonacademic staff and the people in general. Check out what languages are likely to be spoken in your host department or labo-

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Table 1 Oertel's steps to planning a foreign exchange

Step 1	Motivation
Step 2	Language
Step 3	Preparation
Step 4	Goal
Step 5	Timing
Step 6	Arriving
Step 7	Returning home

ratory. It would be disappointing to find out that there are already a number of people in the department who speak (or wish to improve) your own language. This is a disadvantage.

Next make preparations. Analyze in depth the facilities at your own unit/clinic. What are the strengths and the weaknesses? What gaps in your own training and knowledge can you fill and what can you change or develop in your own department when you return with the knowledge and skills you have gained? Would you have the full support of your chairwoman/chairman when you return to implement these changes or to carry on a project you started during your exchange?

Define a clear goal. Do you want to do clinical work, learn a new skill, or start/continue a research project? For clinical work ask if you can get registration and insurance to practice. How long will this take? Do you want to do research? If so, will you get ethical approval for the particular project? How long will this take? These are all questions you would be advised to ask early on. Remember, red tape is everywhere.

We are also warned of common pitfalls in selecting a post or project. Avoid working with patient groups that you are never likely to see at home. Equally, avoid analyzing data or samples not available or never generated in your own hospital/university. Ensure that you are not reliant on a machine or test not available (and not likely to be available in the future) at home.

Then consider logistics and timing of moving country. For how long can I go? For what length of time can I reasonably leave my residency program? Consider early the impacts on family life. It may be wise to act as soon as possible as inevitably personal commitments change. If you can afford 3 months, 6 months, or 12 months, make this clear to your host institution and ask them if they have a project that can be completed in this time. If the answer is no, move on.

Consider what happens when you arrive. Research your host department thoroughly and ensure you would have the support of the head of department. Factor in the cost of travel and living in a dif-

ferent country. Consider how you might set up a bank account in a foreign country, how long this might take, and who you might require to be your referee. Inquire as to the availability and standard of accommodation provided by the hospital. Is it feasible and affordable to arrange travel insurance? If you are working as a clinician, make sure you can obtain medical indemnity insurance abroad and clarify who is going to pay for this.

What will happen when you return home? Can you bring back techniques, skills, and knowledge and how might you implement them? If you started a project abroad, how might you continue it at home? Consider analyzing histology, postmortem tissue, collected DNA or CSF. You may wish to review imaging with a straightforward protocol on a patient population you have learned to characterize at the host institution.

Consider whether you will return home and whether you should return home. Does your country need you? Should this trump your personal aspirations? It is possible that a successful exchange will result in young neurologists being awarded permanent positions at their host institutions. We raise the concern that this could lead to a migration pattern of young neurologists that will be detrimental to poorer European countries, including those outside the European Union. As this point is very serious we ask the officials of the EFNS and in the future the European Academy of Neurology (to be founded 2014) to address this topic with the highest priority. A respective analysis is highly needed to identify ways to counteract this development.

Advancing your research career. When choosing an area to research it is tempting to follow in the paths of others and choose diseases or aspects of diseases that are in vogue. Prof. Chaudhuri advises to listen to the issues that your patients are talking about and not necessarily the issues that are widely published or discussed at international meetings. He spotted a research niche in the study of nonmotor symptoms in Parkinson disease at a time when this was a virtually unstudied area. There are many other such opportunities that will become evident with some creative thought.

Does your host department care for young fellows? Choose your research supervisor carefully. It is possible to determine a great deal about a prospective supervisor from PubMed and from talking to other fellows in the department. Ideally you would wish to work with someone who has published in high impact journals as first or last author. Then consider whether they have demonstrated a willingness to step down in the authorship ranks to allow junior staff to advance their careers. Check on PubMed how many

people were trained in a given department in the last 10 to 20 years who later took independent positions at other cities (this mobility factor is a reasonable indicator as to whether the department cares for the young fellows). It is also possible to tell how someone develops and expands their research interests over time by looking at the breadth of research interest, whether they are collaborators, and whether these collaborations have been repeated and fruitful.

Speak to other fellows. Poster sessions are a great opportunity to do this. As well as academic credentials, you want to know whether a supervisor cares. How long does it take for them to return a manuscript with productive and readable comments? Will they come to your poster if you are at the same conference? If you are in any doubt then visit the department you are proposing to join.

As you subspecialize, Professor Waldemar suggests you consider how to lead research locally and globally. Are there other specialties that share your area of interest? Consider how you might organize collaborative research between specialties and improve the service for patients. Consider, she says, getting involved in writing guidelines. The EAYNT has recently collaborated with the EFNS to involve young neurologists in the process of guideline writing and has trained young neurologists in the application of evidence-based medicine at its evidence-based medicine workshop organized in association with the Cochrane Neurological Field.⁴ We are also made aware that it is extremely difficult to make oneself visible in clinical science at the start of a scientific career in a particular field.

Developing your neurologic style. Finally, Prof. Chaudhuri offered some lighthearted advice on choosing your style of clinical practice. He believes that neurologists have certain phenotypes (table 2) and encourages us to reflect on who or what we want to become.

Discussion. Career advice that is specific to a career in clinical and academic neurology is difficult to find, is not necessarily intuitive, is likely to be given on an informal basis, and is not usually published. The EAYNT seeks to share what we consider to be the valuable career advice presented at the EAYNT special session in 2011 that is based on the personal experience and observations of 3 established Professors of Neurology.

Young neurologists are encouraged to participate in clinical and academic interdepartmental ex-

Table 2 Phenotypes of the neurologist

Describer	Meticulously documents facts; history and examination signs collected in unsparing detail. Rarely cuts corners. Rarely runs to time. Rarely draws conclusions.
Administrator	Adopts roles of administrative authority within a department. Spends less and less time on clinical medicine.
Gatherer	Avidly collects cases (and then files and forgets them).
Hunter	Makes diagnoses and recruits patients in an organized manner with ruthless precision and speed. Often publishes prolifically.
Hothead	Impulsive; devotes time and makes decisions based on "gut instinct."

changes. We propose a structured 7-step approach to planning such a trip. However, we raise caution about the patterns of migration of neurology trainees in Europe as a result of the globalization of neurology training.

Neurology trainees are offered practical means of selecting an academic research interest and supervisor using PubMed, networking, and visiting host departments.

The next EAYNT special session will take place in September 2012 at the EFNS in Stockholm.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Drs. Oertel, Waldemar, and Chaudhuri provided inspiration for the article's content. Drs. Oertel and Paterson conceived the article's design. The other authors contributed to writing and reviewing the article.

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