

My Australian Fellowship Journey - Final Report



Picture of Carlton Gardens, near St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

When I reflect on my fellowship journey, I am often reminded of this quote “Two roads diverged into wood – and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference”. I can definitely and definitively agree, that this fellowship has been life-changing for me.

I am incredibly fortunate to have been given this opportunity to do a fellowship at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM), in Melbourne, Australia. I am happy to report back that it has enhanced and enriched my knowledge, skills and real-world experience. My fellowship at SVHM was a great experience in both advance inflammatory bowel disease and functional GI. I was extremely fortunate to be under the mentorship and guidance of A/Prof Emily Wright, the Head of IBD at SVHM, as my primary supervisor, and Prof Alexander Thompson, Director of Gastroenterology Department of SVHM, as my co-supervisor.

SVHM is a large IBD centre of 8 specialists IBD gastroenterologists. It provides an extensive clinical service to over 1000 patients with IBD, including more than 450 patients on biologics, making it one of the largest IBD centres in Australia. It has a large intestinal ultrasound (IUS) service for the

diagnosis and monitoring of IBD patients and advance endoscopy service for stricture management and dysplasia screening.

One of the greatest dreams I've always had since my gastroenterology registrar days in 2018/2019, was to learn IUS. IUS is currently more available and widely used in Europe, Australia, and North America. Unfortunately, IUS service was not available in Malaysia's healthcare, be it public or private sector, and nor were there any endorsed IUS trainers or IUS training centres in Southeast Asia prior to this. SVHM is a large IUS training centre; with 4 IUS clinic lists per week. I am very much grateful, that after 5 years of wanting to train in this, I have finally had the opportunity to do so, under the supervision of A/P Emily Wright, Drs Emma Flanagan, Sasha Fehily, Michael De Gregorio and Ralley Prentice as my IUS trainers. I am happy to report that I am now certified in IUS; in both Gastroenterology Network of Intestinal Ultrasound (GENIUS) and International Bowel Ultrasound (IBUS) certifications. I have also been endorsed as an IUS trainer for both GENIUS and IBUS. With this, we aim to make IUS more practical, feasible and accessible to train in for our local and regional candidates, with the objective to implement IUS into our healthcare; adjunct with our goal that IUS will change the landscape of IBD management, not only in Malaysia, but in the Southeast Asian region as a whole.

During my time at SVHM, I attended and participated in the weekly IBD clinic and gained experience in using both first- and second-line advance medical therapy for treatment in IBD, and managing IBD patients with varying complexities. I also played an active role in inpatient management; in which indications for admission include acute severe IBD, complex active IBD and patients with treatment related complications.

SVHM works closely with their IBD nursing team, colorectal surgeons, specialist IBD radiologists, pathologists, dietitians, pharmacists and psychiatrists. They hold weekly multidisciplinary meetings, journal club meetings and virtual therapeutic drug monitoring meetings to ensure the best care for their patients. These meetings are attended by all the team members and are excellent learning opportunities. I gained valuable experience in true multidisciplinary management of patients with IBD by participating in these weekly meetings.

I had additionally participated in their weekly pregnancy IBD clinic, under the supervision of Dr Emma Flanagan and A/Prof Emily Wright, in which they monitor pregnant IBD patients throughout their pregnancy via clinically, biochemically and via IUS. They also provide preconception counselling for patients and reassess patients postpartum. During my time at this clinic, I have managed to see patients from their pre-conception care, all the way until their post-partum period. It was truly an amazing and comprehensive experience to have.

In terms of endoscopy, I performed both elective and emergency endoscopic procedures. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity of having regular endoscopy lists, where I performed endoscopic procedures solo. In addition to that, I also joined the weekly IBD endoscopy list; where I gained valuable experience on colonic dysplasia surveillance and colonic stricture dilatations; in which I was then able to perform independently. I was also taught on how to perform haemorrhoid banding and subsequently had regular endoscopic lists to perform this independently. I had done approximately 800 endoscopic procedures during my time at SVHM. In addition, I also performed emergency endoscopic procedures; be it at either the endoscopy daycare, operation theatre or in ICU. I was also a part of the endoscopy oncall roster of SVHM.

SVHM also has a large IBD research program lead by Prof Michael Kamm, A/P Dr Nik Ding and my primary supervisor, A/P Dr Emily Wright. Their active research projects include studies in IBD pathogenesis, Crohn's disease stricture management, the management of fistulizing Crohn's disease, fecal transplantation in IBD, IBD management in pregnancy, the IBD microbiome, dietary treatment in IBD and therapeutic drug monitoring. Specifically an analysis on their centre's early experience with selective JAK inhibitors in IBD was a topic I was looking into; providing me with valuable experience about the use of these medications in IBD, which is of limited availability in Malaysia. I had also conducted a prospective quality assurance study, under the guidance of my supervisor, A/P Dr Emily Wright, with the aims of developing an algorithm in the treatment of acute severe ulcerative colitis, including the role of salvage therapies, using different types of biologics and small molecule therapies. Several of these projects were presented at both local and international conferences; such as SVHM Research Week, Australasian Gastroenterology Week and Digestive Disease Week.

Below is a list of research projects that I was involved in during my my time at SVHM:

1. *A Phase 3, Multicenter, Open-Label Extension Study of Oral Ozanimod for Moderately to Severely Active Crohn's Disease*
2. *A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter phase III study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of ABX464 once daily for induction treatment in subjects with moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis*
3. *A Phase 3, Randomized, Placebo-controlled, Parallel-group, Multicenter Study to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Guselkumab in Participants with Fistulizing, Perianal Crohn's Disease*
4. *Management of moderate Postoperative recurrence in Crohn's disease: a randomized controlled trial of therapeutic escalation, the POMEROL trial.*
5. *Does infliximab dosing to target with therapeutic drug monitoring yield higher rates of healing than standard infliximab dosing in patients with perianal fistulising Crohn's disease? A prospective, randomised, controlled, multi-centre study*
6. *A Multicenter, Randomized, Double-blind, 2-Part Phase 2 Study to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of GS-1427 in Adult Participants With Moderately to Severely Active Ulcerative Colitis (UC)*
7. *A Phase 3, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Program to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of MK-7240 in Participants with Moderately to Severely Active Ulcerative Colitis*
8. *Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Phase 2 Study of VE202 in Patients with Mild-to-Moderate Ulcerative Colitis*
9. *A Multicenter, Randomized Study to Evaluate the Safety and Efficacy of Lutikizumab for Induction and Maintenance Therapy in Subjects with Moderately to Severely Active Ulcerative Colitis*
10. *Microbial Restoration in Inflammatory Bowel Disease (MIRO) trial*
11. *A Prospective Randomised Controlled Trial of Adults with Perianal Fistulising Crohn's Disease and Optimised Therapeutic Infliximab Levels: PROACTIVE Trial.*
12. *The role of salvage therapy in current practice for management of acute severe ulcerative colitis*
13. *Beyond metrics: Esophageal hypervigilance is better associated esophageal symptom severity than pH and HRM metrics*
14. *A dietitian first dietitian gastroenterology clinic reduces wait times for specialist outpatient care*

In addition to advance IBD, during my fellowship I had also learned and gained valuable experience with the functional GI expertise provided by St Vincent's, led by Dr Chamara Basnayake. SVHM has extensive functional GI services, which include weekly functional GI clinic, that is a multidisciplinary, comprehensive clinic consisting of gastroenterologists with the special interest in functional GI, nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists and psychiatrists, followed by a functional GI multidisciplinary meeting at the end of the clinic session to discuss the cases. I am very thankful that I was given my own weekly Functional GI clinic session during the last 8 months of my fellowship and managed 8-10 patients per clinic session. Pelvic floor physiotherapy and rectal biofeedback therapy are among the many services provided at this clinic, which I had also trained in. They also have a biweekly functional GI psychology meeting, where they discuss on complex and diverse functional cases, that I was and still am, actively involved in. I also additionally learned the role and utility of esophageal manometry and pH impedance studies, and was trained in performing and interpreting the analyses of these studies, under the guidance of Dr Chamara Basnayake.

The Gastroenterology Department of SVHM had regular weekly meetings and journal club presentations; that I was attended, participated and presented in. I had also attended various local and international meetings and conferences in IBD, gastroenterology, functional GI and hepatology.

Below is a summary of my weekly schedule at SVHM

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM	IBD MDM IBD Journal Club Research Group Meeting IBD Clinic IUS	Manometry Functional GI Psychology meeting Endoscopy	IBD pregnancy clinic Endoscopy	IBD endoscopy	Endoscopy
PM	IUS Gastroenterology unit meeting	Endoscopy Research/Clinical trials work	IBD TDM Histology Clinic Research/ Clinical trials work	Functional GI Clinic Functional GI MDM	Gastroenterology ward audit Journal Club IUS

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to A/Prof Emily Wright, Prof Alex Thompson, the IBD Unit and Gastroenterology Department of SVHM; for their role in guiding me, inspiring me and welcoming me into their unit during my time with them. I would also like to extend a huge thank you to APAGE for helping me to embark in this journey. This journey not only enabled me to gain much valuable knowledge, skills and experience; it also helped build deep-rooted connections and friendships.

To conclude, the road not taken is definitely not easy. But that makes the journey an even more meaningful one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Shahreedhan Binti Shahrani', written in a cursive style.

Shahreedhan Binti Shahrani

Gastroenterology and Hepatology Specialist

(MBBS, MMED, ESEGH, GI and Hepatology Fellowship (Mal), Fellowship in Advance Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Aus), IUS Certification (GENIUS, IBUS)

University Malaya Medical Centre,

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

