The Society for Cardiac Angiography and Interventions (SCAI) fellows’ course is an annual US event designed to consolidate the learning and experience of North American interventional fellows in the middle of their training programmes, allow a forum for networking and share experiences and techniques with other fellows. Hosted in Las Vegas, it provides an outstanding opportunity to interact and learn from some of the pre-eminent figures in US cardiology with input from a number of leading physicians and institutions including Ted Feldman, Jonathan Tobis and Morton Kern to name but a few.

Taking place over the course of 4 days the coverage of topics was comprehensive and very much put forth as a curriculum rather than a conference style offering, with a series of presentations given to a static audience. Starting each day with a presentation over breakfast, the course covered a multitude of topics from optimal access techniques, to structural heart disease, aortic and peripheral interventions as well as carotid disease and ventricular support in high risk PCI and cardiogenic shock. US practice clearly differs from that in the UK but there was a great deal to learn and apply with many seemingly standard techniques in the US, particularly as pertains to troubleshooting, unused in my own UK experience. Also remarkable was the use of ventricular support with ECMO and Impella devices at the forefront of management in high risk cases with the intra-aortic balloon pump seemingly relegated to the past, in this technologically driven environment.

Whilst the didactic sessions provided both a refresher and interesting new hints and tips, breakout and simulator sessions were also available in the adjoining exhibition hall where small group Consultant (or in the US vernacular, Attending) led sessions often with technical support from manufacturers, were invaluable. Affording an opportunity to interact on a one-to-one basis with experienced operators, the session on rotational atherectomy was particularly useful with computer based simulators providing an excellent learning environment.

Back in the main hall, a particular highlight across the whole 4 days of the course, were the fellows’ case presentations which, as I understand, were a recently implemented innovation for the meeting. Having invited submissions from all attendees, some truly stunning cases were presented, a particularly memorable one being of the gentleman who came in for an elective stent to a subclavian stenosis and went home a few days later with stents in both renals, his celiac axis and a TEVAR after things hadn’t gone exactly as planned.

Each day concluded with an evening dinner session with one of the most interesting talks being on the history of coronary intervention. Presented by senior physicians whom had actually worked with the likes of Andreas Gruentzig, these first-hand accounts of the early days of PCI accompanied by grainy photographs of ‘Heath-Robinson’ angioplasty balloons
being baked in a kitchen oven, provided a unique perspective on the pioneering work which has led to the democratised and mature specialty we see today.

Overall the SCAI fellows’ course was an exceptional learning experience, providing a distinctive lens on coronary and structural intervention which will both inform and guide my future practice. I am extremely grateful to BCIS for the opportunity to attend this conference and recommend future trainees to apply for this outstanding opportunity.

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