

# Doctors in Training Grant

## PRELIMINARY REPORT



Enjoying winter walks around Hyde and Regent Park

**Dr Kai'En Leong**

**Advanced Cardiac Imaging (CT/MRI)**

**Royal Brompton Hospital & Hammersmith Hospital**  
London, United Kingdom



I am now just over 3 months into my fellowship and the time has gone by very quickly. As for everyone, this year has been incredibly challenging with Covid. My fellowship was originally meant to commence in March 2020 but with border closures and the first wave of the pandemic that was particularly severe in the UK, my travel plans were disrupted and my supervisor was not able to specify a new start date. The first half of the year was spent in Melbourne in great uncertainty as to whether I would even be able to start my training in 2020.

Eventually as things settled in the UK over the European summer, my supervisor greenlighted the commencement of my fellowship. It was then a frantic rush to get things ready for departure. At the time, Melbourne was in the middle of stage 4 restrictions and it was a challenge to vacate and prepare our home for lease. After being granted an exit permit to depart Australia, it was another surreal and interesting masked 30-hour travel experience on a largely empty plane to London via Singapore. In all, the lead up to my fellowship was most unusual but I was raring to get started with my imaging training and immensely relieved when I finally arrived at Heathrow airport.

### Fellowship

At present, I am undertaking my training at Imperial College NHS trust/Hammersmith Hospital. Cardiac imaging at Imperial College NHS trust is radiologist led, and as a cardiologist, this has granted me a different and unique clinical perspective which I have found very valuable.

*My appointment at Imperial is with the radiology department, as such I do not have any cardiology ward-based/on call responsibility and this has allowed me to fully immerse myself in learning imaging over my relatively short tenure of one year.*

With my timetable, I spend each day with a different imaging consultant, 3 of whom are radiologists and 2 are cardiologists. A typical workday would have me running cardiac CT and stress cardiac MRI lists, reporting the studies and then discussing my reports with the consultant. Various multi-disciplinary meetings (MDTs) would also take place throughout the week. A very wide range of agendas are covered, with meetings such as the amyloid MDT, pulmonary hypertension MDT etc. With distancing requirements, these meetings are held online. In addition to reporting scans, I've also had the opportunity to learn from very experienced radiographers and this has been invaluable in understanding the technical aspects of scan acquisition.

*There is a very strong research emphasis at Imperial with the MRC (Medical Research Council) London Institute of Medical Sciences located within Hammersmith Hospital. As part of my fellowship, I also have the opportunity to undertake cardiac MRI research at the Robert Steiner MRI unit and for my year in London, I am looking at the clinical utility of a trial strain in the pulmonary hypertension, as well as the relationship between right ventricular exercise contractile reserve in pulmonary hypertension and diffuse myocardial fibrosis quantified by native T1 parametric mapping.*

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My initial 3 months in London was also made busier by my preparations for the ESC/EACVI cardiac MRI certification examination. This exam, originally scheduled for December 2020 onsite in Spain during the EACVI congress, was converted to an online format for the first time. It was a novel experience completing the exam in my living room while being 'supervised' by a remote proctor via my laptop's webcam. However, the IT worked very well and this would certainly be one of the positive Covid legacies with future examinations being delivered in this manner, saving overseas candidates a trip to Europe!

**Healthcare system**

The NHS shares a lot of similarity with Australia's Medicare system and consequently, Australian and British doctors move between both systems with reasonable ease. However, there are several key differences as well. From a cardiac imaging perspective, MRI is certainly more extensively utilised, with scan numbers at Hammersmith hospital alone easily exceeding any Australian site by almost 10-fold annually. Clinicians here have embraced the modality and cardiac MRI plays a much larger role in the diagnostic workup and management of cardiology patients here and is often the first line imaging test for a multitude of conditions. Reflecting on my practice in Australia, I could envision multiple scenarios where cardiac MRI might have added significant value to care over standard echocardiography such as investigation of first presentation cardiomyopathy or myocardial infarction with non-obstructive coronary disease, however significant barriers to access still remain in Australia. With cardiac CT, the scope of utilisation is similar to Australia, but similar to MRI, the volume is much greater.

**London**

My wife has accompanied me for this year in London and we were lucky to secure accommodation in the brief period of eased restrictions in London prior to the reimposition of lockdown. As is well known, rental prices in London are astronomical but with the departure of expatriates and international students, a silver lining has been the significant discounting of rental prices. We were fortunate to find a one bedroom flat in central London at 30% off the prior asking price, however this still translated to the equivalent rental cost of a 2 bedroom house in Melbourne!

Despite the lockdown, it has been greatly enjoyable going for winter walks around Hyde and Regent Parks. It is certainly a very surreal experience seeing the grand, world famous Oxford and Regent streets deserted with all shops closed.

As with any European fellowship, regional travel is typically one of the highlights but this has of course been impossible. Nonetheless, I am hopeful things will rapidly look up in the very near future with the accelerated vaccine roll out.

With the remaining duration of my fellowship, there is still much more to learn and do. I will be attending the Royal Brompton Hospital in the upcoming months to undertake training in congenital cardiac disease MRI, along with several congenital cardiac disease courses. Despite the challenges posed by Covid, my time in London so far has been very personally and professionally rewarding and I look forward to the months ahead.



1. Undertaking my training at Imperial College NHS Trust/Hammersmith Hospital.
2. A surreal experience seeing the grand, world famous Oxford and Regent streets deserted with all shops closed.

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