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ST1 Histopathology

**Why did you want to go to the Joint Meeting?**

As this was my first ever pathology conference, I was particularly eager to attend the 15th Joint Meeting in Ghent to deepen my exposure to current developments in histopathology, molecular diagnostics, and the evolving landscape of digital pathology. The opportunity to attend an international meeting of this calibre, bringing together leading speakers and specialists from Europe, the US, and Japan, was extremely appealing. I hoped it would allow me to broaden my understanding beyond my routine clinical environment and engage with cutting-edge research and translational pathology. Receiving the generous bursary from the BDIAP made this opportunity accessible, and I viewed the meeting as a crucial step in both my professional development and future career within academic pathology.

**Do you feel more confident in your clinical practice following attendance at the Joint Meeting?**

Attending the Joint Meeting has increased my confidence in clinical practice. The lectures and case-based sessions provided practical insights into diagnostic approaches across a range of organ systems, and I came away with a clearer understanding of the reasoning behind certain diagnostic criteria and classifications. For instance, discussions around the updated WHO classifications and evolving molecular frameworks helped clarify complex topics that I had previously found challenging. Seeing how experienced pathologists navigate grey areas in diagnosis gave me a stronger sense of how to approach uncertainty and apply evidence-based decision-making in practice.

**Highlight aspects of what you have learnt from the Joint Meeting which you were not aware of prior to the day.**

There were many such aspects, but one of the most unexpected yet fascinating learnings taken from the Joint Meeting was the presentation by Professor Lars Vereecke titled "Sticky situation: how adhesive bacteria drive colon cancer." This session introduced a topic I had not anticipated hearing about at the conference, namely the role of the gut microbiome, and specifically adhesive strains of *E. coli*, in driving colorectal carcinogenesis. Professor Vereecke's discussion centred on the genotoxin colibactin, produced by these bacteria, and its ability to induce DNA damage in host epithelial cells. This was not a topic I expected to encounter at the meeting, but it was one of the most engaging and thought-provoking sessions I attended. It deepened my understanding of the molecular mechanisms by which the gut microbiome can

influence cancer risk and underscored the importance of considering bacterial factors in tumour biology, an area I now realise has significant diagnostic and therapeutic implications.

**Are there any aspects of what you have learnt during the Joint Meeting that you would consider incorporating into your own practice or have already incorporated into practice?**

Given how early I am in my pathology training, attending the trainee symposium was particularly invaluable. It provided an opportunity to learn directly from internationally renowned pathologists who presented rare and diagnostically challenging entities that I had not previously encountered. One such example was adenosarcoma of the uterus, a condition I was aware of in name but had never studied in detail or seen represented in cases. The focused teaching and high-quality slide images helped solidify my understanding of its key histological features. As a result, I now feel equipped to recognise such entities should they arise in real-life diagnostic practice. Being exposed to these conditions at this stage in my training has expanded my diagnostic repertoire and will undoubtedly influence how I approach complex or unfamiliar cases in the future.

**Did the Joint Meeting meet your expectations?**

The meeting fully met, and in many ways exceeded, my expectations. I anticipated a high standard of academic content, but I was particularly impressed by how well the sessions balanced scientific rigour with clinical relevance. The atmosphere was collegial and welcoming, and as a first-time attendee, I felt included and supported throughout. The variety of sessions, from plenary lectures to organ-specific symposia, meant there was always something of direct interest. It was also a valuable chance to hear about pathology practices in other countries, which provided helpful perspective on the differences and similarities in training and service delivery.

**Finally, would you recommend it to your colleagues?**

I would absolutely recommend the Joint Meeting to colleagues, especially those early in their careers or considering an academic or specialist route within pathology. The conference offers not only a rich educational experience but also a unique opportunity to connect with peers and senior figures from across Europe and beyond. The availability of bursary funding, such as that offered by the BDIAP, makes it even more accessible, and I think many trainees would benefit from attending at least once during their training. It is a well-organised, inspiring event that left me feeling more engaged with the specialty and excited about the future of pathology.