

# My Experience at the VUMC (Vrije Universiteit Medisch Centrum) in Amsterdam from 1 April 2008 till 28 May 2008



The gastroenterology unit at the free university hospital in Amsterdam (VUMC) is a busy unit with 7 consultants, 7 assistants (registrars) and 7 research fellows. The number of procedures done per annum is more or less as follows:

gastrosopies= 2000, colonoscopies= 1500, proctoscopies = 300, double balloon enteroscopies = 250, ERCP's = 150, manometries = 300 (anal + oesophageal), dilatations and stenting = 180, endo-ultrasounds = 150, push PEG's = 50, pull PEG's = 150, liver biopsies = 200.

The head of the unit is Professor Mulder, the only professor in the department. His special interest is coeliac disease and treatment of the refractory forms of this disease, for which he is regarded as a world authority. Professor Mulder also takes a special interest in gastroenterology around the world and has done a lot for gastroenterology training in the 3rd world. He, in conjunction with the South African gastroenterology units has set up an exchange programme for qualified doctors and medical students. By that he has created an enriching experiences and opportunities for many gastroenterology trainees around the world.

During my time at the VUMC I was free to choose to join any procedure, clinic or ward rounds.

- I spend quite a few sessions in the liver clinic and learned how to do ultrasound guided liver biopsies.
- I performed a few double balloon enteroscopies via the oral and the anal route under supervision.
- I also learned to place PEG feeding tubes percutaneously. This expensive device is not available at our hospital, but is useful when there is danger of seeding tumour tissue in for example ENT tumours, or where oral endoscopy is difficult.

In that case an ultra thin neonatology scope can be used to guide the push PEG procedure.

- I gained more experience with the use of argon plasma coagulation (APC).
- I joined a few sessions of endo-ultrasound and dilations.
- I performed quite a few colonoscopies. Colonoscopy at the VUMC is a 2 person procedure with a nurse doing the advancing of the scope. I found that this entailed a challenge for the nursing staff and therefore got them much more actively involved in the procedure.
- I also performed upper endoscopies, mainly to help out, whenever possible, but learned a lot while doing this.
- I enjoyed picking up small tricks and gadgets that make life much easier, such as, for example, an injection device that gets fitted to the water channel of the scope. The scopist can flush and inject for example a bleeder at the same time.

Clinically I enjoyed the different spectrum of disease and the Dutch people in general, whom I perceived as extremely helpful when being asked and generally very warm and humorous. All in all I found it a worthwhile experience, not to mention that my bicycling skills improved tremendously.

Thank you to NycomedMadaus and the Gastro Foundation for the support and making this trip possible.

## Barbara Scholz

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