Fellowship Review

Laclinic Aesthetic Surgery Fellowship

Samer Bassilios Habre, MD

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Laclinic was established in 2002 in Montreux and specializes in aesthetic plastic surgery, cosmetic dermatology, and dentistry. There are 4 specialist plastic surgeons (Dr Michel Pfülg, Dr Serge Lê Huu, Pr Phillip Blondeel, Dr Jean-Charles Bayol), 3 cosmetic dermatologists, and approximately 30 employees. There are 2 clinics. The main clinic is in Montreux, which runs like a luxurious private hospital. It has 3 accredited operating rooms, and 9 overnight suites. The second clinic is designed as a walk-in clinic in Lausanne (approximately 30 km away) and emphasizes nonsurgical rejuvenation. The main clinic in Montreux is where the fellowship is based (Table 1).

It was a gynecology and obstetrics clinic, renovated into a charming modern clinic that brings out beauty and harmony. The place is graciously decorated with art paintings and sculptures and has a stunning view on Lake Geneva.

WORKLOAD

In 2015, there were around 500 operations performed. The clinic is mainly an aesthetic surgery clinic, with less than 5% of caseload dedicated to reconstruction (breast reconstruction by Pr Blondeel).

TABLE 1. Fellowship Summary

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<tr>
<th>Fellowship Title</th>
<th>Fellowship Supervisor and E-mail</th>
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<tr>
<td>Laclinic Aesthetic Surgery Fellowship</td>
<td>Dr. Michel Pfülg <a href="mailto:m.pfueg@laclicin.ch">m.pfueg@laclicin.ch</a></td>
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Location

Laclinic Montreux, Avenue de Collonge 43, 1820 Montreux-Territet, Switzerland.
Telephone: +41 21 966 70 00. www.laclicin.ch

Daytimes duties
07:45 AM-6:00 PM. Attend surgery till early afternoon and clinic in the afternoon

On call duties
Being available in case of return to the OR

Length of fellowship available
3 mo only

No. fellowships available/year
4 consecutive fellowships/year, for 4 different fellows. Each fellowship is 3 months long, with only 1 fellow at the same time.

Typical dates
January-March, April-June, July-September, October-December

Salary
Nil

Accommodation
Laclinic provides one spacious, furnished, bedroom apartment facing the clinic

Requirements/experience
Qualified plastic surgery residents in senior year, or recently graduated plastic surgeons (less than 2 years from graduation)

Selection process
This fellowship is part of Dutch Association for Facial Plastic and Reconstructive surgery (DAFPRS) fellowships. This fellowship participates with 12 other plastic surgery departments, from 9 different countries, in the DAFPRS fellowships program.

Application to DAFPRS (dafprs.nl):
CV
Application form
Motivation letter

Three letters of recommendation from 3 different plastic surgeons.
The prospective fellow chooses 1 or 2 plastic surgery departments, from all the participating units.
The duration is 3 or 6 months, depending on the requirements of each participating unit. The deadline for application is the end of April of the previous year. No interview is done.
No prerequisites are required such as a board certification, or a European diploma. The DAFPRS committee ranks the participants based on the full application materials, and matches them to the selected units.

Once selected in Laclinic aesthetic fellowship, the applicant from non-European countries should obtain a visa. Fellows must be able to speak French or English.

What was particularly good?
High load of a wide array of facial aesthetic surgeries
Involvement in breast augmentation planning using the Akademikliniken method, implant choice, and 3D simulation

Suggestions for future improvement
Fellow outpatient clinic/operating list (unrealistic due to the setting of a private clinic)
The aesthetic caseload during my 3-month fellowship (January 2016-March 2016) included 141 operations divided between 80 facial aesthetic surgeries (Table 2), 40 breast aesthetic surgeries (Table 3), 14 body contouring and liposuction operations, and 7 breast reconstruction or touchups involving 1 deep inferior epigastric artery perforator flap. Monday through Thursday, the majority of my time was spent in the operating room. Fridays were reserved for hair transplantation (8 cases) and minor procedures under local anesthesia. I would scrub in all of the operations. My role was to assist, rather than undertake the procedure. The operating surgeons would also involve me in the preoperative drawings and surgical planning, as well as postoperative management.

Afternoons are dedicated to consultations. Attending preoperative consultations is a skill often overlooked by residency programs due to busy resident hours. During this fellowship, attending preoperative consultations was a great opportunity for me to be involved in the analysis and in the surgical decision planning. I valued being taught the Akademikliniken Method for planning breast augmentation surgery and deciding on an implant. Postoperative consultations were also invaluable in the management of dressings and sutures and in addressing patients concerns.

Other than consultations, there are many opportunities to benefit from such as ancillary procedures that include lasers, peels, and a high volume of injectables and fillers. No patient refused my presence, and doctors were always happy to share their experiences and different techniques.

The on-calls were quiet, because no patient was returned to the operating room. The staff was professional, and the atmosphere very convivial. Masterclass sessions in facial threads (Silhouette soft) were held in the clinic, and I was fortunate to attend 2 training sessions.

I was also lucky to attend a workshop given regularly to the employees, about communication skills with patients and managerial aspects of running a private clinic. Although not related to surgery, these sessions provide valuable insights for plastic surgeons interested in setting up an aesthetic clinic.

Given the short period, no research is required.

Even though it is preferable to understand and speak French, this is not a requirement. The staff and most patients speak English. Many previous English-speaking fellows completed the fellowship and were able to attend patients’ consultations and understand with the help and translation from the surgeons.

There is no salary or funding. However, the provided free and equipped accommodation and the proximity to the clinic reduce the living cost considerably.

The main negative aspect is the lack of a fellow outpatient clinic and a fellow’s operation theater list. This can be frustrating but is understandable, because it is a private clinic. Based on my personal experience, 3 months is an appropriate duration to critically observe the practice of other surgeons and adapt it into your own.

LIVING IN MONREUX

Montreux boasts one of the most beautiful walks along the lake, stretching 13 km. Montreux is also home of the international Jazz festival in July, the Freddy Mercury Statue, and the castle of Chillon. The train system is very developed with well-served destinations, such as Lausanne (25 minutes), Geneva (60 minutes), and nearby ski slopes.

SUMMARY

Laclinic provided me with a good exposure in facial aesthetic surgery and breast augmentation. I appreciated the experience gained from preoperative consultation, as well as being able to scrub in and assist in all the operations. I highly recommend it to surgeons interested in aesthetics, because it is an invaluable preparation for a career in aesthetic surgery.