We would like to thank the AUA and the EAU for the opportunity to participate in the EAU-AUA 2016 International Academic Exchange Programme. This programme truly represents a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and has been one of the most rewarding professional experiences of our careers.

As scholars we come from a variety of different personal and professional backgrounds in the United States, but share a common dedication for research, scholarship, innovation, and teaching. This programme helped to foster these passions through a lively exchange of ideas, professional collaboration, and outstanding programme. Our experience began on Saturday, 27 February, with an excursion through Sheffield and outstanding programme. Our experience began on Saturday, 27 February, with an excursion through Sheffield and outstanding programme. We were welcomed to the department by Professor Dirk De Ridder and his team during their morning report. Here we observed the residents transitioning care to the on-call staff. The UZ Department of Urology is a busy service with many complex patients; however, we were all very impressed with their ease of doing the handoff so effectively and proficiently in English. Later, Prof. De Ridder gave an overview of the department and of the Belgian healthcare system. Their comprehensive and integrated electronic health record, which was developed "ground-up" and with extensive physician input, was not only state-of-the-art, but combined ease of use and was portable, and facilitated efficient communication between caregivers across the health system. It also included cost information at the point of care, which was remarkable. The teamwork and collaboration amongst medical students, residents, and faculty of the Urology team at UZ Leuven clearly stood out. We enjoyed our oncological and functional operative observations with Professors De Ridder, Steven Joniau, and Frank Van Der Aa—indeed, we marvelled at the combined force of surgical leadership and excellence and systems integration in the operating room. We were also honoured to share our own research endeavours in the special setting of the Faculty Club at the Bégijnage and toured the Department’s research facilities and heard about the groundbreaking research in developing animal models for studying underactive bladder.

Our time in Belgium ended with a sampling of the rich culinary (world famous chocolates and regional beers) and cultural delights of Belgium. Prof. De Ridder and his faculty and house staff’s hospitality was wonderful and our hosts ensured that we had a comprehensive understanding of the scope and breadth of urological practice and academics at UZ Leuven, and ensured that we experienced the culture and history with wonderful walking tours of Leuven and Brussels.

University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy
We arrived in Milan under rainy and cloudy skies, but the warm reception by Professor Monzorsi and his Department at the University Vita-Salute San Raffaele made up for the chilly conditions. The accomplished surgical and research team led by Professors Monzorsi, Scardicchio, Suardi and colleagues presented some of most thought-provoking research on prostate and kidney cancer that we heard during our visit. We were impressed by the world-class investigational infrastructure and the interactive research presentations and operating room observations, which enhanced our shared understanding and will certainly foster future collaborations. The echoes of history were constantly present during our walking tours where we viewed the impressive Duomo, the Sforza Palace, and the historic Teatro alla Scala, as well as the Futurist architecture. Our hosts went above and beyond to ensure that we had a special experience by visiting one of the world’s most famous and treasured paintings: The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci. Gazing at this late 15th century fresco painted in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie and listening to our guide detailing the expressions and emotions of each of the characters was an unforgettable and awe-inspiring experience. The trip ended with the delightful, avant-garde and regional cuisines and wine pairings and brilliant conversations that we shared with our Italian friends.

LMU-Klinikum der Universität München, Munich, DE
The final stop in our itinerary was with Professor Stief and the Department of Urology at LMU in Munich. We were briefly immersed in the clinical life and activity of the Department. Our hosts, Professors Stief, Gratzke, Stoeckler, and their team graciously arranged for us to scrub into many of their surgical procedures. While there we enjoyed the culture of innovation and high-volume surgical prowess which pervaded the Department and its operating rooms. Our presentations generated spirited discussions which will hopefully lead to further collaborations. Our experience was rounded up by an unforgettable walking tour of the heart of Munich and its historical medieval origins, Baroque splendour, and modern synthesis. We were gracefully welcomed to Professor Stief’s home for a wonderful lunch followed by a special tour of the Lenbachhaus Museum, whose collection highlighted Munich’s role as a focal point in the birth of modern art and the “Blue Rider” movement.

Annual EAU Meeting, Munich, Germany
Attending the 31st Annual European Association of Urology (EAU) Congress was to receive our plagues from Prof. Chapple at the EAU Friendship dinner.

The display of work by Kandinsky, Marc, Unterkircher, and many other at Lenbachhaus will fit together to give the visitor an understanding of how the Blue Rider school of art developed.