



Sjællands Universitetshospital Køge Danemark with Prof. Frederik Helgstrand

During the Swiss Hernia Days 2025 networking event, I was fortunate enough to win the 7th Swiss Hernia Day International Fellowship. My host was now Prof. Frederik Helgstrand and his hernia team (Mette Willaume, Carl Beck and Flemming Hjørne) at the Sjællands Universitetshospital in Køge. Køge is a harbour town located 30 minutes south of Copenhagen, Denmark's capital city.

Already the next day, we agreed on a time and date. I was amazed that Frederik had already planned his surgeries more than six months in advance. We arranged for me to start the fellowship just after Easter Monday, so that I could visit the region with my family over the Easter weekend.

On my first day I was picked up by Frederik himself. After changing into hospital clothes and taking part in the morning handover, we went straight to the operating theatre. I got to see Frederik perform a robotic e-TEP, and then I watched Mette, one of his colleagues, perform another one.



During my stay, I had the opportunity to observe robotic e-TEPs with and without lateral release, as well as robotic TAPPs for umbilical and abdominal wall hernias close to the inguinal region. I also had the opportunity to scrub in for an open sublay incisional hernia surgery. I learnt about and performed the special access technique that Frederik's team use for the camera port in robotic e-TEPs. During operations and between two cases, I could ask relentlessly questions about the surgical technique, the steps and the pre- and postoperative care. It was never the wrong moment.

I was fortunate enough to witness an emergency hernia surgery. Frederik performed a laparoscopic reduction of an incarcerated peristomal hernia. I also had the opportunity to observe Frederik and his team during a full day of consultations. On top of that, I got to see an ultrasound-assisted Botox injection.

The Northstar Congress, hosted by Intuitive, took place in Copenhagen on the 9th and 10th of April. I had the opportunity to attend and watch live surgeries transmitted from California during a pleasant dinner, as if they were taking place in a neighbouring hospital. On Friday, there were some very interesting talks about how Scandinavian hospitals had implemented robotic programmes. These were not only used for hernia surgery, but also for intensive day surgeries (10 robotic cases or more per day) and even emergency surgeries.



My entire stay gave me the opportunity to see how the Danish health system, which is a national based system, and a Danish hospital function. Almost all hernia surgeries are performed in an outpatient setting!

Finally, I was given the chance to see how good friends work and operate together and how a team can be led so that everyone can achieve their full potential.

Thank you to Henry and Philipp for giving

me the opportunity to be part of such an experience, which changed my daily surgical practice immediately. As soon as my first on-call night after the fellowship came around, I put the tips and tricks I had learned from Frederik into practice during an open sublay at 3 o'clock in the morning.



Finally, I would like to thank Frederik from the bottom of my heart for his hospitality and kindness, and for spending almost two weeks educating me. I am lucky, happy and proud to say that I met surgical maestros and made danish friends for life!



Dr.med. Michael BENOIT

Oberarzt, Spital Thun,
Chirurgische Klinik (Switzerland)