**Report – The Head and Neck Cancer Foundations first Facial Nerve/Facial Reconstructive Fellow.**

By; Associate Professor Catherine Meller

With the Foundations support, we welcomed our first Fellow in Facial Nerve and Facial Reconstructive Surgery at Prince of Wales Hospital. Dr Shamil, a post graduate Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in the UK, joined our team in October 2023, and spent time furthering his skill set with myself, and several other ENT and Oculoplastic Surgeons.

The Fellow in Facial Nerve/Facial Reconstruction played a pivotal role in advancing patient care and research at the Prince of Wales Public Hospital Facial Nerve Clinic. This report outlines the impact of the funding provided for this position and raises future options for sustaining and expanding upon these achievements.

Achievements:

1. Enhanced Patient Experience: The presence of our Fellow significantly improved the overall experience of patients visiting the clinic, reducing their waiting time and increasing their face to face time with specialised clinicians. Through individualised/personalized care, patients and their care givers received comprehensive treatment and support.

2. Increased Patient Volume: With the added expertise of the Fellow, the clinic experienced a notable increase in the number of patients served, many coming from interstate. This signifies the growing demand for specialized facial nerve reconstruction services and highlights the effectiveness of the clinic's operations.

3. Research Contributions: The collaborative efforts of the Fellow and the clinic's team led to the successful completion of two research publications, both accepted by peer-reviewed journals. These publications contribute valuable insights to the field of facial nerve reconstruction and reflect the clinic's commitment to advancing medical knowledge.

4. Patient Stories: The creation of patient stories served to showcase the innovative work of the clinic, providing real-life examples of the impact on patients' lives. These narratives not only highlight the achievements of the clinic but also inspire confidence and trust within the community. These are specifically designed for the use of the Head and Neck Cancer Foundations website to raise awareness and visibility into facial disfigurement.

Future Plans:

1. Moving forward, there is a need to formalize funding for an ongoing position dedicated to facial nerve reconstruction. This will ensure the sustainability of the clinic's operations and facilitate long-term planning and development.

2. Expanded Duties: In addition to continuing the current scope of responsibilities, there is an opportunity to expand the role to include further clinical duties and research capacity. This expansion will enable the clinic to remain at the forefront of advancements in facial nerve reconstruction and enhance its contributions to patient care and medical science.

3. International Representation and Collaboration: There is an opportunity to partner with units overseas to accept Fellows via a streamlined pathway, and potentially allow international collaboration on research and training.

Conclusion:

The funding provided for the First Fellow in Facial Nerve Construction has yielded significant benefits in the area of treatment of facial disfigurement/facial palsy. Through enhanced patient care, increased research output, and community engagement, the clinic has demonstrated its commitment to excellence in facial nerve reconstruction. Looking ahead, formalized funding and expanded duties will ensure the continued success and growth of the clinic, further solidifying its position as a leader in the field.