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Report on the Second International Breast Imaging Update – IBUS - Freiburg, Germany, 15-17 October 1999

Freiburg is a city of 200 000 inhabitants of which 10% are students. It is located in the south west of Germany in the area where Germany, France and Switzerland meet. The Congress was held in the Konzerthaus.

It was organised by the International Breast Ultrasound School in conjunction with the August Ludwig University of Freiburg. The congress covered the whole range of topics in mammography.

It was also very interesting to see that a full series of hands-on workshops ranging from ultrasound to minimally invasive breast biopsies to pathology and breast intervention were held for all the delegates.

A pathologist presented one of the most interesting sessions that I attended. There was an introductory course into breast cyto-pathology,

which was very interesting. A practical demonstration with a wide range of slides demonstrating the problems of cytology was covered in this session of nearly two-and-a-half hours. I think that all breast imagers should make an effort to get some basic exposure in pathology especially now that we are doing such a lot of breast intervention. It gives you insight into the practical problems of breast cytology and why the reports look the way they do.

A large technical display was on at the same time. Interesting developments as far as apparatus is concerned is from Mammotome (which is marketed by Johnson & Johnson in South Africa). The Mammotome machine is well known to breast imagers. It is a vacuum biopsy device. The problem with this equipment in the past was that you had to have a

special table and apparatus. They have now brought out a hand-held breast vacuum biopsy device. This has great potential in use under ultrasound guidance. The apparatus was practically demonstrated to us. It has all the advantages of the larger apparatus and prone tables with very few disadvantages. The apparatus is easy to use and practical with distinct advantages for the patient. On a practical video linked to the local hospital, excision of a fibro-adenoma under local anaesthetic with a hand-held Mammotome machine, was performed within 15 minutes. The complete fibro-adenoma was removed.

As far as ultrasound is concerned, a very interesting lecture was given about a standardised version of guidelines for use of ultrasound. Worldwide it seems that we all have the same problems as far as the use of ultrasound is concerned. IBUS has now laid down criteria and invited comment on a set of standards whereby the user of ultrasound equipment will have to undergo a strict qualification and abide by the criteria before ultrasound can be performed. Like in South Africa, it is a big problem in Europe that everybody can buy an ultrasound machine and use it whether they are qualified or not. I am glad to see that Jack Jellins and his group are now addressing this problem and I hope to see positive developments emerging from this.