

ASA Highlight: Physicians Assistant Anaesthesia from the United Kingdom Markets New Regional Anesthesia Teaching App



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The American Society of Anesthesiologists holds possibly, the largest conference for anesthesia providers in the world. Attracting upwards of 15,000 attendees, this year's (2014) Anesthesiology™ conference was held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The last time I visited New Orleans was 12 months after Hurricane Katrina had unleashed its full force on the city. Hurricane Katrina is defined as the costliest natural disaster on record, as well as one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. The devastation was plain to see in 2006 so I was hoping that things had picked up 8 years on, and indeed they had. I was travelling with Dr. Tom Bowden a Consultant Anaesthetist from QEHB.

Tracy Burkett and Jennifer Linzalone, two second year AA students that have just completed their

rotation with us in the UK gave me a list of things that we should experience whilst there, these included a Hurricane Cocktail, A Hand Grenade! Crawfish Jambalaya and Gumbo as well as many other food and drink related items! I succeeded in ticking these off as well as a few more!

So what was a contingency from the UK, doing in downtown New Orleans?

Students that have rotated to QEHB, and those I have met at various conferences will know that my key interest is regional anesthesia. In 2013 I had an idea to develop a regional anesthesia teaching app, so along with 3 colleagues we started to plan and design the app. We soon realized that to produce such a high spec app would require a substantial input of financial support so we approached the provider of our nerve block products, "Pajunk" (pronounced "Pie-Unk").

A trip to Germany followed, and whilst there I presented to the directors of Pajunk a "Dragons Den" style pitch with the hope of securing the funding. We chose Pajunk as they are a key company in regional anesthesia products, their most famous needle the Sprotte spinal needle was developed in 1979, and remains one of the most popular spinal needles in the world. It is family owned and operated, and the company, which was started by two brothers in 1964, is still based in Geisingen in SW Germany. Here all their products are manufactured in their high tech modern facility. We were privileged to receive a tour of the facility and were amazed at the personal approach to

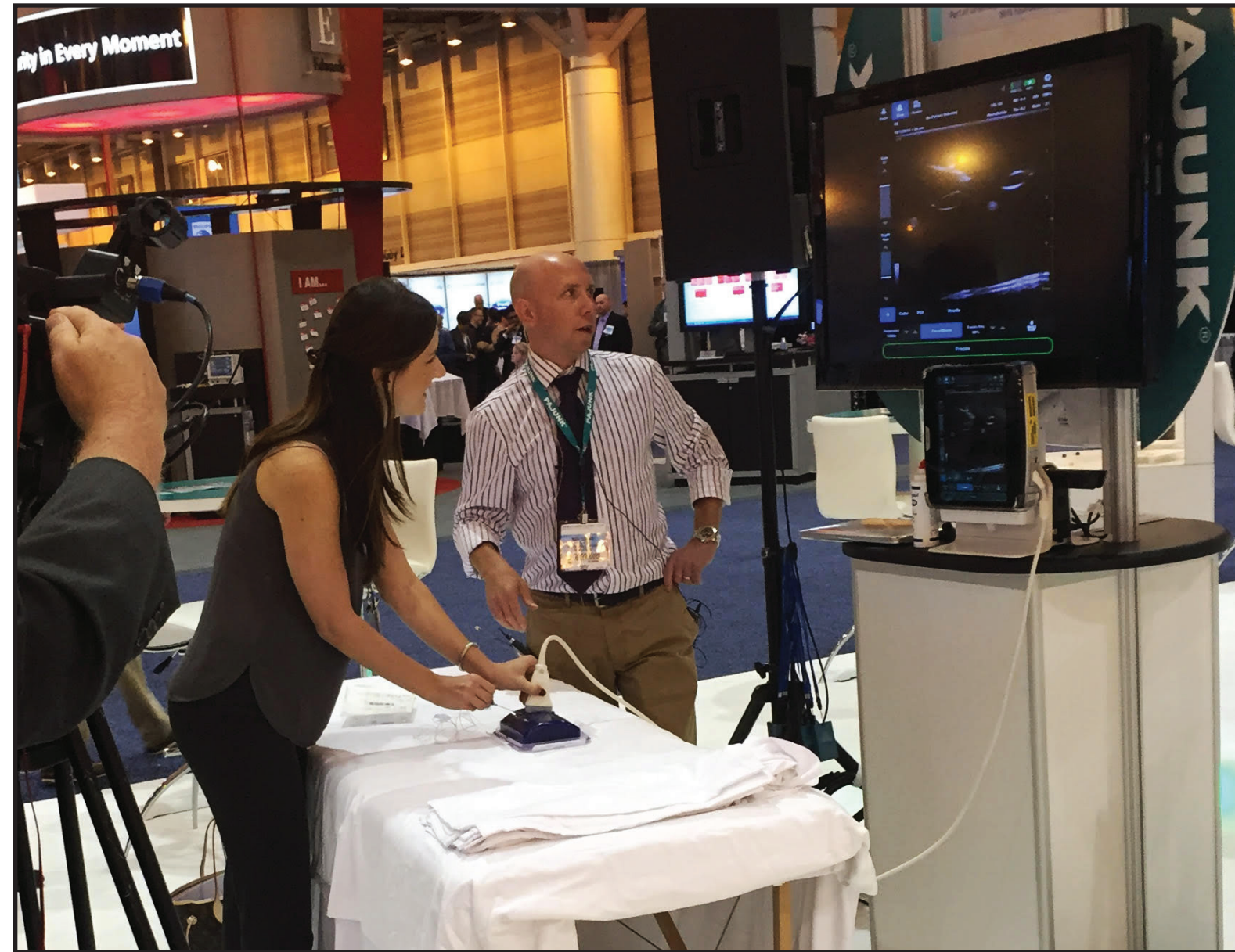
manufacturing the products; it has certainly gave me more respect for the needles I use today.

Pajunk were more than happy to be involved so funding was agreed and "Block GuRU" was created. Block GuRU is available on iPad, iPhone and Android based systems. It is an offline (on iOS formats) teaching app focusing on regional anesthesia nerve blocks commonly performed in most institutions. We are currently preparing a major update to the app, which will include nerve catheter techniques as an addition to the single shot blocks currently available. Once purchased all future updates are free.

So back to New Orleans, entering the trade stand is like walking into a shopping mall. There are anesthetic products that you wonder how you ever survived without them, and some that you wonder what you would do with it! You can buy an anesthetic machine, ultrasound, text books and at the same time join the military. There is also a vast selection of freebies from mugs and pens to screen cleaners; the freebies always seem to have the ultimate appeal over anything else.

Dr. Tom Bowden and I were busy marketing the app to the masses in attendance. Our other role was to represent Pajunk, and to demonstrate and perform regular presentations to the ASA delegates. I was fortunate that, at one of my presentations, I was able to teach a first year AA from Nova, Mary Tomaino to insert a new Pajunk "E-Cath".

In front of a large audience, I asked Mary to be my student to teach



Nova student Mary Tomaino places a new e-catheter with ultrasound guidance under the direction of Mr. Mark Leonard (Senior Physician's Assistant in Anesthesia) with PAJUNK

the method of inserting a CPNB, it was only when I invited Mary up to "have a go" did she inform me that she had not used an ultrasound machine before, let alone insert any type of nerve block! Fortunately for me Mary was pretty good at it, and

in fact the video of her inserting the E-Cath into a phantom can be seen here: www.pajunkadvantage.com/ecatheter.php

The ASA was an amazing experience. I have attended many international conferences but none of the

same scale as this. The conference next year 2015 is in San Diego, October 24-28th If you have never been this may be the year to go, but believe me nothing will top Bourbon Street, New Orleans on a Saturday night!