

Elective Posting Down Under

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Introduction

Our elective placement took place at the Box Hill Hospital which is a teaching hospital affiliated with Monash, La Trobe and Deakin Universities in the city of Melbourne, Victoria. It is one of the seven hospitals that are governed within the Eastern Health network which provides healthcare services across the Eastern metropolitan area of Victoria. The Box Hill Hospital provides the following services; emergency care, general and specialist medicine, intensive care, mental health services for children, adolescents and adults, maternity services, post-acute care programmes and specialist surgery. Established in 1956, Box Hill Hospital is the largest of Eastern Health's acute hospitals, admitting more than 48,000 patients each year.

Elective Placement

We applied for our elective placement through Monash University, whereby we were placed at the Box Hill Hospital. During the elective period, we spent four weeks in the plastic surgery department. We joined the plastics team of consultants and registrars, and shadowed Paul di Giovine (Registrar) as well as Bruce Wilkie (Resident).

We met a final year medical student from Monash University, and learnt about the culture in Australia

as well as how the medical education differs. Elective students were expected to attend clinic sessions, ward rounds and observe the procedures in the operation theatre from 9.00am to 5.00pm daily. Outside of working hours, we also spent time together exploring Melbourne and visiting all the famous tourist spots.

The system of medical education at Monash University is slightly different to that of our home university (UCSI). Fifth year students have very minimal classes in the university and are instead expected to attend the wards each morning and visit the patients that are assigned to them, write follow-up notes and find investigation results from the previous day. The registrar then conducts a daily ward round. If any further investigations are ordered, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure these were carried out and the results are delivered to the patients file in a timely manner.

Being responsible for our own patients is something which we had never fully experienced in Malaysia before. We found it very rewarding and captivating as the students are truly involved in the care that the patients receive. Consultant ward rounds took place weekly and after each on-call session. These ward rounds were very lengthy as each patient was discussed in detail. The emphasis was on education of students and junior doctors and these sessions taught us a great deal.



Hanisha



Shalini

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Clinical presentation of patients during clinic sessions

Medical students in Melbourne are well integrated with the clinical firm and actively participate in patient care. We were given many opportunities to present cases during the clinic sessions in front of consultants and registrars and we found this worth the choice of coming to this placement.

This experience enhanced our confidence and now we feel that we are able to present and make valuable contributions during ward rounds and clinic sessions while back here in Malaysia and partake in the overall care of the patients.

Observe procedures in the operation theatre

In Malaysia, we have had limited opportunities to scrub in during an operation or observe procedures in the operation theatre. Even if we are allowed in, we were instructed to observe from a certain distance. However, during this elective posting, the registrars were kind enough to allow us to scrub in during a procedure as well as explain the steps involved while they were operating. This allowed us to gain a more in depth understanding of plastic surgery.

Experience working in an environment where there is no hierarchy system

We noticed a major difference in the healthcare working life, whereby there were no segregations between nurses, residents, registrars and consultants. All of them worked in a peaceful environment and are treated equally regardless of their post in the healthcare hierarchy which is in contrast to our local settings. In Malaysia, there seems to be a hierarchical

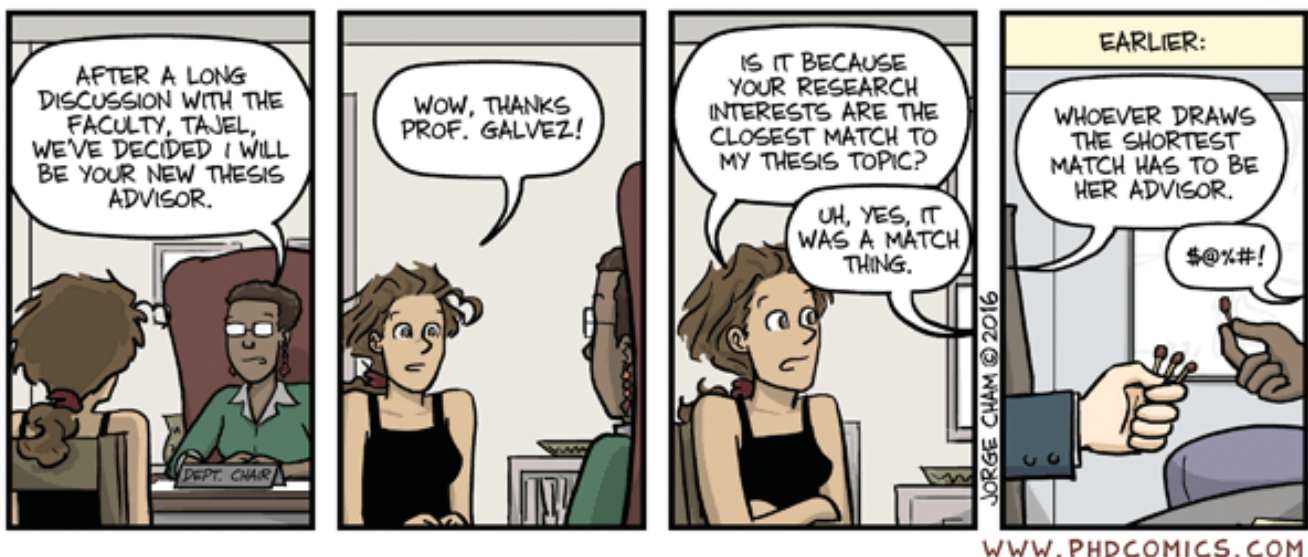


Shalini (left), Dr Paul di Giovine (Registrar) and Hanisha (right) in the OT

gap between the specialists, the junior doctors and medical students. Setting up a meeting with the specialists would usually require a lot of preparation and appointment ahead of time.

Conclusion

Our elective was an extremely enjoyable and educational experience. We feel that we have learnt a lot, not only about plastic surgery, but medicine as a whole. We have experienced a different healthcare system, different culture and way of life. We feel that this has broadened our horizons and made us more knowledgeable about the world. As doctors, we will meet people from all over the world, and the experiences during this elective posting certainly met our expectations and had given us insight into how we should prepare ourselves for a medical career.



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