

Exchange to Sale, Australia



My name is Mary McWatters and I'm part of the rural immersion program (RMIP) in Blenheim this year. I was given the opportunity to go on a two week exchange with Monash University to Sale, Gippsland in Australia.

As a 5th year I am at the same stage as the 4th year medical students and I joined into their program. The Central Gippsland Health Service (the hospital in Sale) is a similar size to Wairau in Blenheim with paediatric, women's, medical and surgical wards as well as an emergency department. Monash University has a

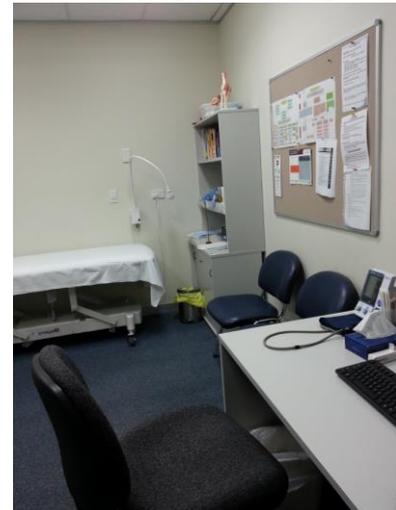
small teaching facility next to the hospital including a skills lab with very up to date equipment for the students to practice on. They also have tutorials for the medical students here. The 4th years have tutorials on Mondays and Fridays. They have GP led tutorials as well as ones covering paediatrics, psychology, women's health and a bit of emergency.

I spent both Tuesdays in the emergency department. I was able to see some patients myself and then discuss them with an intern or consultant who would then go and see them. I also observed the doctors assessments of patients. While I was in ED there were several MET calls (medical emergency team) which I was able to watch, a lot happens all at once. At first I struggled with the medications used over here as some different medications are used than I am used to or I just wasn't familiar with the brand names (most drugs in Australia were prescribed under brand names which meant google was used a lot).

It just so happened that several young women came in with syncope (fainting) symptoms during the day in ED so I got quite used to the workup for this problem. Otherwise the presenting complaints were fairly representative of a normal ED day; constipation, chest pain, eye pain and falls for example.

I also spent Wednesday and Thursday each week at the Clock tower medical centre. This is a general practice with 8 doctors a mix of consultants, registrars and interns (PGY1's). I sat in with a GP at first to get the feel of the software they use here and then got to see a few patients first in the afternoon.

Many of the appointments were follow ups for patients on long term medications or with medical problems which required review. We also had to go and ensure patients were fit to receive a vaccine during the day. The first day finished with some minor surgical skills required to remove a large fragmented splinter from a young girl's arm. The rest of my time spent here was great with patients booked into see me first. I would take a history and do an exam if necessary and then call the doctor in and present the patient. I got to see a great range of things from menstrual problems to a potential appendicitis. I learnt a bit about the logistics of the Medicare system and how the Australian medical system functions.



In the weekend I went to the Gippsland medical school ball in Traralgon. This was a great evening and I got to meet heaps of medical students. It was a masquerade and there were students that really made an effort and won well deserved prizes. There was even a photo booth which provided you with strips of photos to take home. I then spent the weekend catching up with some of my family who live near Traralgon. Was a great opportunity to see them again and explore their farm in Toongabbie.



I was also able to attend the Tuesday “parma night” which the medical students and some of the doctors attend. They go to a local pub which has a deal of a chicken parma and drink on Tuesdays. Chicken parmigiana is a big thing in Australia so I was told I had to have it at least once. It's it basically chicken with cheese and ham on top. It comes in many flavours but the students said that last week's vegemite one didn't go down well.



On Friday morning Rebecca (the NZ student in Barnsdale) went to Melbourne for a bit of sightseeing before we headed back to NZ. We went to the Melbourne museum first which was a great place to visit! It is a very well set out museum and we even go to see Phar lap the horse. We then went to an Aussie rules game which was great fun, North Melbourne vs. Carlton. It was a very close game so the crowd was very on edge near the end! With each referee call half

the stadium would be up yelling. On Saturday we explored the Victoria markets which are huge, we picked up some great souvenirs and gifts to bring home. We spent the afternoon at some factory outlet shops



getting some cheap clothes.

We flew out Saturday night but were unfortunately not able to land in Christchurch due to fog. We were diverted to Wellington and landed about 130am. We were given a hotel for the night and as we were the last to check in got

to top floor suit which was very fancy! We only had 2 hours to enjoy it though because then it was time to go back to the airport. However I got home safe and sound if not a bit tired!

A great experience all round. A great way to experience medicine in a different country. It was also a fantastic way to meet medical students from Australia. Many thanks to Pat Farry Trust, RMIP and Monash University for adding to my medical student experience.

Mary