

# AMSF Travel Scholarship Report

Recipient: Alicia Callisto

Destination: St Mary's Hospital, London UK



St Mary's Hospital is one of four major trauma centres in London, receiving over 50 trauma calls a week. It covers the entire north west of the city where on a typical Friday night, the staff in Accident and Emergency (A&E) have to rotate multiple trauma patients between the 4 resus beds, CT scanners and camera crew. Typical patients encountered include stabbings, falls, sepsis and motor cycle accidents. I was lucky enough to secure a four-week elective here and get involved in all aspects of critical care. The main

reason I chose A&E was to get exposure to a variety of patients in a fast paced, team environment. I have also only experienced glimpses of emergency medicine during a Stroke elective and found it a reprieve from long and tedious ward rounds. This elective was also the perfect opportunity to immerse myself in world class trauma and critical care practice and consolidate my knowledge of multiple specialties which unite in the Emergency Department.

When resus was quiet I spent my time in 'Majors' which is an area comprised of 16 beds filled with less critically ill patients. I was able to assign myself to a patient then present them to the doctor who would then order the respective tests and referrals. 'Minors' is another area within the department where patients are transferred to if they are not suitable for admission but not stable for discharge. If no monitoring is required, patients are moved to Ambulatory Emergency Care (AEC) to wait for results prior to discharge. By transferring patients, they prevent a breach of the 4-hour time limit in the department. This was continuously being documented by a film crew for a TV series called "Hospital" airing on BBC2. This was found to be equally exciting and a nuisance by the staff. It highlights the increasing stresses in the health care system in St Mary's and is worth a watch!

I was fortunate enough to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Congress of Trauma and Critical Care with the generous funding of the Adelaide Medical Student Foundation Scholarship. Over two days it showcased a great sample of research currently taking place in critical care. As it was at the start of my elective it was an excellent introduction to the new ideas and improvements that are still required in this field. Most notably was the new management



guidelines of sepsis which I was able to put into practice during the following weeks. The best part



was networking with specialists from all over the world. These included a cardiothoracic surgeon from Oxford, a neurosurgeon from Hong Kong and the head of the Emergency department in India. One of my personal favourites was a trauma surgeon from Pakistan. Listening to her stories of regular gunshot injuries and bomb blasts demonstrated the huge culture difference between our countries. I am truly grateful for the AMSF support, without which this would not have been possible.

St Mary's has a great group of doctors who were very supportive and encouraging. As the time of my placement fell during final exams there was only one other elective medical student in the department. This allowed us to have greater responsibility as part of the team and see the most interesting patients. I found the mornings were typically quiet while the afternoons became much busier. Most nights were filled with trauma calls and resus was overflowing. I was able to scribe during trauma calls and assist the team during resus. This included assessing a patient who had been stabbed, interpreting his CT scan and cleaning the wound. I was also able to assess and treat a man in urinary retention by inserting a catheter draining over 1.5L of fluid observing the almost instantaneous reduction in pain. Another part of the A&E is working with the family of the patient, who are generally very concerned when they discover a loved one is unwell. It was important not to underestimate the large psychological impact of trauma for those involved and their family.

One of the moments that will stay with me forever was the breaking news of the Westminster terror incident on BBC and hearing the consultant declare that we would be the major trauma centre who would accept the patients involved. We cleared out the entire A&E department in preparation then subsequently received the man who was shot as well as other casualties. I could not believe I was able to observe in resus and then be assigned to a trauma team who treated one of patients involved in the incident. Although it was terrifying to think of what the patients had been through, it was amazing to see the combined bravery and immediate coordination of people come together to help. The department is designed for these sort of unfortunate events, and it was inspiring to be a part of the well-designed protocols as they came to life.

My consultant encouraged me to balance my time at the hospital with sightseeing which allowed me to explore many parts of London and take a weekend trip to Dublin for St Patrick's Day. I was able to visit Stone Henge, Windsor Castle and Bath which are definitely worth every cent. I also saw the Taming of the Shrew at Shakespeare's Globe and the brilliant Ed Sheeran at Royal Albert Hall.

Without question this has been the best 4 weeks of medical school. Not only has it allowed me to improve my resilience and communication skills by dealing with complicated cases and debilitating trauma it has given me confidence in my own medical reasoning and independence. The generosity of the AMSF allowed me to take my elective to new heights by providing the funds to attend an international conference where I was immersed in current research and inspiring people whom I now call friends. It has also supported me with the cost of the elective and an expensive visa which meant I could devote more time to study than worrying about these financial burdens. This is a wonderful initiative that I am deeply indebted to, as it really was a dream come true.

