

## **AMSF Travel Scholarship Report**

**Recipient: Louise Fraser**

**Destination: United Kingdom**

I applied to undertake my elective at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge as I wanted the opportunity to experience paediatric medicine at this internationally renowned hospital. I was seriously considering a future career in paediatrics following my placement in fifth year. I wanted to undertake a paediatric placement again in a completely different setting with completely new colleagues to determine if what I enjoyed was the paediatric medicine, rather than anything else about my placement in fifth year.

During my time at Addenbrooke's Hospital, each week I was with a different paediatric unit, including community and child development, general paediatrics, emergency paediatrics, and neonatology. This was ideal as it allowed me the chance to experience a wide variety of paediatric medicine during my short placement.

My time with the child development centre was one that resonated strongly with me. One particular story that has stayed with me was that of a young girl with a unilateral hand tremor following encephalitis. She was very self-conscious of this tremor and hid her hands in her clothes for much of the consultation. When I enquired about school, her mum told me that a few weeks prior she had a spasm while holding her lunch tray and split her lunch down the front of her uniform. The girl was so embarrassed and afraid it would happen again that she would not eat lunch at school. While reflecting on her story, I was struck not only by how far children will go to hide anything different or embarrassing in order to fit in, but how easy it would be for us to find a simple solution for such a significant problem in her life.

I also enjoyed the time I spent in the paediatric emergency department. The children I saw presented with common childhood complaints – abdominal pain, fever and febrile convulsions, simple injuries, and vomiting and diarrhea – which gave me the opportunity to refine my clinical skills as well as assessing a patient within a time limit. I saw children who were in pain and scared as well as parents who were anxious, overwhelmed and in need of reassurance. I rapidly learnt strategies to calm children and distract them from pain, including searching for 'Where's Wally' while putting in cannulas and singing a song about compost to a little boy while I sutured his finger. I was also the first person to assess a few children with 'diagnostic dilemmas', including a case of Panayiotopoulos syndrome (a very common but poorly recognised childhood epilepsy syndrome). I found that even within the week, I became more proficient at history taking and at developing a rapport with the children and their parents. By the end of the week, I was far more confident in my own clinical skills and my ability to see patients independently as an intern next year.

The timing of my placement fell mostly during the summer break for the Cambridge Medical School, which meant I did not get to spend much time with the English medical students. This, however, gave me the opportunity to spend more one-on-one time with the consultants from many different areas of paediatrics. Not only did this allow me to learn more of the nuances of paediatric medicine, I was also able to demonstrate my skills and knowledge, which apparently impressed one consultant so much that he asked me to seriously consider returning to Addenbrooke's for my post-graduate training!

I stayed on the Addenbrooke's site in the provided accommodation. As the accommodation was basic at best, I spent as little time there as I could and instead spent my evenings exploring the city centre of Cambridge, often getting stuck in 'Cambridge gridlock' traffic during the evening rush hour! Cambridge during the summer was stunning and the perfect setting to walk through colleges and their grounds (with the quintessentially English 'keep off the grass' signs), browse the daily markets, and punting along The River Cam. The summer months were filled with festivals and shows, including the, annual Shakespeare Festival in the College gardens, the King's College evensongs, and the Cambridge Big Weekend, with music, stalls and fireworks. Then, when tired, hungry or just because it was afternoon teatime, I would sit down to scones and tea with the other elective students. These women and men from around Australia, Germany, Greece and Austria rapidly became some of my best friends and I look forward to keeping in contact with them for many years to come.

Keen not to waste a moment, I also took the opportunity to travel every weekend to a new place and new experience: singing along an English Proms concert at an estate house in Derbyshire, competing in the Scottish Highland Games in Luss on the shores of Loch Lomond, and walking along the Brighton Pier in the rare British sunlight with one of my new elective friends. All have remained as very found memories to reflect on now that I have returned to Adelaide.

I can easily say that my time in Cambridge was one of the best experiences of my life. Professionally, I feel my understanding and love of paediatric medicine grew exponentially during this time and I have made many important contacts should I return to Cambridge in the future. Personally, this time has left me with a renewed sense of confidence in my abilities both in medicine and in my own independence.

I am indebted to the Adelaide Medical Students' Foundation for awarding me a Travel Scholarship for this elective. The Foundation's generosity allowed me the opportunity to fully immerse myself in both paediatric medicine and the Cambridge experience without having to worry about the costs of elective application or accommodation. I thank the Adelaide Medical Student's Foundation for their support of medical students and hope that many medical students will be able to take advantages of this travel scholarship into the future.

To any student looking to plan their elective I would give the following advice: do not waste a single moment of your time away and it will be the best experience of your life!