

AMSF Travel Scholarship Report

Recipient: Xi (Cicy) Li

Destination: Oxford, UK



**ADELAIDE MEDICAL
STUDENTS' FOUNDATION**

I was fortunate to be able to spend four weeks in renal medicine at the University of Oxford Renal Unit at the Churchill Hospital. This elective significantly advanced my knowledge in renal medicine and also gave me a better understanding of the healthcare delivery system in the United Kingdom. I also developed personally from this elective through exposure to the vibrant academic and cultural environment of Oxford.

I first became interested in renal medicine through a patient I looked after in rural general practice in fifth year who had end-stage kidney disease requiring dialysis. I first met this patient when he was hospitalised and got to know him quite well during multiple subsequent consultations. I was struck by the enormous impact renal disease had on his life. He was on haemodialysis for his end-stage kidney disease. However, there was no haemodialysis unit near his house so he had to travel over an hour and back three times a week for his haemodialysis. Seeing this patient made me realise the profound impact renal disease can have on a patient's life and how little I knew about kidney disease. I resolved to do a rotation in renal medicine and was luckily accepted to do an elective at the University of Oxford Renal Unit.



The beautiful Radcliffe Camera House which is one of the buildings of Oxford's library

The Oxford University Renal Unit is a world-leading centre of nephrology, providing services to a population of about two million people over a large catchment area. The unit is responsible for 550 dialysis patients, 900 transplant patients and many other patients with nephrological problems. Its base at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford is a tertiary referral centre for nephrology however the unit is also responsible for multiple satellite renal units in the surrounding area. The renal unit is also associated with a transplant unit that does a large amount of kidney and kidney-pancreas transplants.

At the unit, I was exposed to a wide range of renal disease in many different settings. I spent time in in-patient and out-patient settings. On the wards, there were patients of all age groups with many different pathologies including diabetic nephropathy, renal cell carcinoma, renal vasculitis and calciphylaxis. I saw many cases of patients with acute on chronic renal injury requiring admission for dialysis and stabilisation of electrolytes and fluid levels. I learnt about the many different triggers of renal deterioration, the immediate and long-term management of patients with renal failure and became more comfortable with common medications used in renal disease such as diuretics, artificial erythropoietin and phosphate binders. I was also able to observe multiple renal biopsies.

In the out-patient setting, I observed both common and uncommon renal diseases. There were many cases of chronic kidney disease due to diabetes or hypertension for follow-up and long-term management. However, I also got to observe rarer conditions. I took a history from two very classic cases of Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis in one week and now will never forget the presentation of this condition. I palpated many polycystic kidneys and am now much more comfortable with kidney palpation. I also saw patients with rare kidney diseases such as Gitelman syndrome.

I also spent some time on haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis to gain an understanding of dialysis treatment. The haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis nurses were extremely knowledgeable and spent considerable time explaining the process of dialysis and dialysis equipment to me. It was also interesting to talk to dialysis patients to gain an understanding of the personal effects of dialysis. A highlight of the placement was visiting the satellite dialysis centre of Milton Keynes which is about an hour away from Oxford with a very different socio-economic demographic to Oxford. The spectrum of renal disease was more severe in Milton Keynes and there was an unusually high prevalence of lupus. It was also interesting to observe how the satellite dialysis unit ran.

In the last week of my placement, I spent time with the transplant unit. Time on this unit gave me a much better understanding of the work-up for kidney transplantation, kidney transplantation and effects of kidney transplantation. It was incredible to see the immediate effect of successful kidney transplantation on patients' lives: patient's creatinine levels dropped immediately after transplantation and they had a quick improvement in quality of life. I was also able to scrub up and assist in some operations, which was exciting.

This elective was also valuable from a non-medical perspective. Oxford is an incredible place and there are always many events happening. It attracts many high calibre speakers and I listened to many interesting talks including Sir Barry Jackson (previous Serjeant Surgeon to the Queen and past president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and Royal Society of Medicine) speak about his life experiences. There was also a vibrant social life. There were several elective students there at the same time as me and the local students were also very friendly. During my time at Oxford, I attended two formal college dinners, a croquet party, the Oxford Summer 8's rowing regatta, and



One of the streets of Oxford

multiple concerts and theatre productions. It was also amazing to just walk around Oxford and explore the history and beautiful architecture of the city. Also, being in England meant easy access to other tourist attractions in the United Kingdom and Europe which was good for travelling after my elective.

Overall, my four week elective in Oxford greatly assisted both my medical development and personal development. Medically, I have gained a much better understanding of renal diseases, dialysis and renal transplantation. Personally, I have been able to observe a different healthcare system, experience a new country, have incredible experiences and meet wonderful people from all over the world.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Chris Pugh, Oxford electives coordinator Ms Carolyn Cook, the renal unit at Oxford and the University of Oxford for giving me such a fantastic opportunity and supporting me during my elective at Oxford. I would also like to thank the Adelaide Medical Students' Foundation for providing me with a travel scholarship to fund this trip because it greatly eased my economic burden for this trip and made everything possible.



The Summer 8's Rowing Regatta