



## **SCOPE – Italy – Udine – Cardiothoracic surgery – 2016**

My name is Sulayman el Mathari, a medical student from the Netherlands. In July 2016 I participated in the SCOPE exchange program of the IFMSA. I've been on exchange in Italy, in a small city named Udine. I did my clinical clerkship at the Santa Maria della Misericordia Hospital in the department of cardio-thoracic surgery.

In advance of my clerkship I made up some goals and expectations which I wanted to do/experience during my stay in Udine. This list of goals and experiences is for every individual student different. My list consisted not only of goals regarding my clerkship but also regarding the spare time I would have in the weekends and in the afternoon when finishing my work at the hospital. It's really important to not only focus on goals regarding your clerkship, because there is so much to see in your new environment. Go out, explore, talk to people and grow!

During my stay in Udine, I lived in a dorm. I had an own room with access to a shared kitchen. I experienced the stay as very pleasant because the local students, who live in the dorm as well, are very social and willing to help you in case of questions. Basically, this was how I experienced whole Italy. Very nice people. First I didn't expect the local people to speak english, but after a while I realized that a lot of people actually do speak English. That made the communication easier, which I'm happy about.

As mentioned earlier, I did my clinical clerkship in the Santa Maria della Misericordia Hospital in Udine, in the department of Cardio-thoracic surgery. This department consisted of a big team, containing 16 surgeons and more than 20 nurses. The whole team was very nice and willing to teach me everything that I wanted to know or see. Everybody worked with each other in a very informal and friendly sphere, which I experienced as very pleasant. It made me feel that I was part of the team. I did my clerkship under supervision of dr. Benedetti who is a 4th year resident in cardio-thoracic surgery.

On a regular day in the hospital started I started at 07.30 a.m. We started with a morning meeting in which all the doctors discussed the patients in the department. The morning meeting was in Italian. Because I couldn't understand much of what was said during the meeting, my tutor gave me every morning a small summary afterwards. After the morning meeting we would start visiting the patients in the ward. Here I did some physical examination under supervision of my tutor. After leaving the patients' room we would discuss the patient and the findings of the physical examination that I did. After the ward round I would visit the surgery room and attend an operation. Depending on the duration of that operation, I was allowed to leave the hospital afterwards.

The local committee in Italy managed to organise a well filled social program for the exchange students. Every weekend there was an event in which the exchange students would be involved. This was a good thing, which I enjoyed.

I had a good experience with my contactperson in Italy. Months before my clerkship I got contacted by my contactperson. I received all the practical information that I needed and he was always available in case of questions. At arrival, my contactperson picked me up from the train station and brought me to the dorm in which I would stay for the whole month. During my stay in Italy, I kept in touch with my contactperson and he would ask me multiple times how I was doing and if everything was still as I wished it to be. Very pleasant.

When comparing the Netherlands and Italy considering the healthcare system I would say that financial issues are less a problem in the Italian healthcare world. In Italy, the healthcare system is accessible for anyone who needs healthcare. In Italy people pay a regular tax to the government, which also includes healthcare. The government, upon receiving the taxes, divides the taxes over several disciplines. One of them is the healthcare discipline. Contrary to the Netherlands, there is no such thing as a private healthcare insurance in Italy.



The healthcare system in Italy is quite good. There are no big complaints. The only point that I heard is that the doctors think that private healthcare insurances would have advantages for the doctors regarding their earnings. A doctors' salary is not that high in Italy, because the government strives to keep all their inhabitants equally paid.

This clerkship was very important to me. It confirmed my desire to become a cardiac surgeon. I had the chance to have a live experience of how it was to be a cardiac surgeon. Doing this for a whole month, I realized that this was definitely what I want to do further in my career. Another thing that I learned was in company of the other exchange students which I met during my stay in Italy. I learned about a lot of different cultures and languages. Same goes for Italy. All this together made me grow, not only as a medical professional but also as human individual.

