

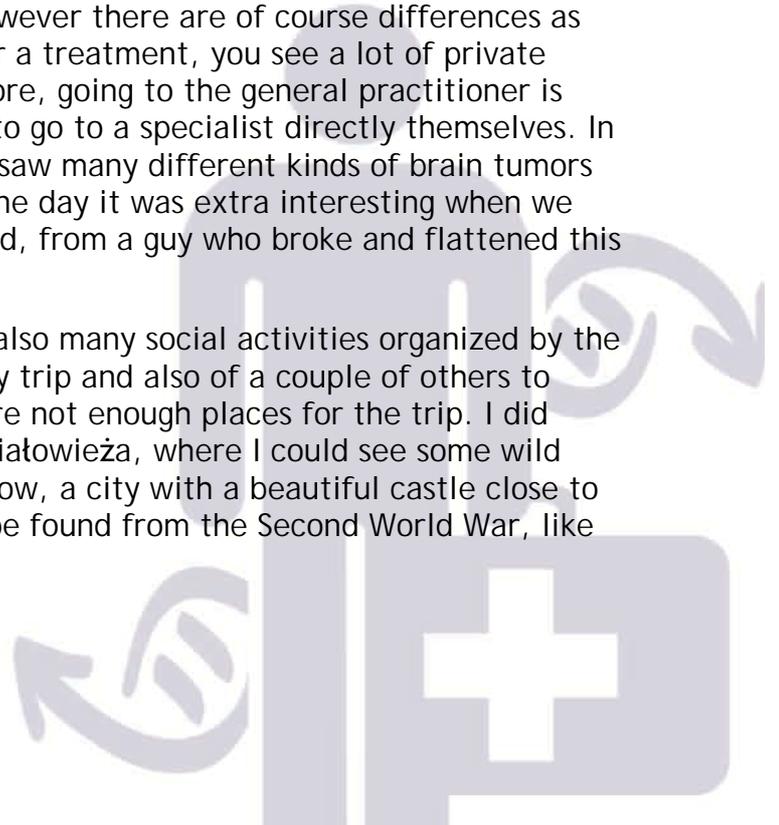


On Sunday 2nd of August I arrived late in the evening with bus in the city of Lublin. The dorm for medicine students was easy to find according Google maps, right across the Academic Hospital. So I wrote to the local Polish medicine students beforehand that nobody needs to pick me up. Because we were a relatively large group of interns from all over the world, arriving at different times, and I could imagine they were very busy with the others. The dorms were by the way shared with a roommate, my roommate was from Portugal. It was very fun for a month, but I cannot imagine living and studying with a roommate in such a small room for a long period. To let us get used to the city and the unusual tropically hot weather, we got a day off on Monday and we started the exchange program on Tuesday.

The next four weeks I would go every morning during weekdays to the department of neurosurgery. Although the more than fifty year old building of the hospital looked old-fashioned from the outside, it was high-tech and modern inside the operation room. I learned from the locals that especially since the time Poland joined the European Union, they were able to start modernizing the hospitals among other things like infrastructure. This is needed, at many places you still see outdated buildings from the old communist times. At neurosurgery I was together with a girl from Morocco, named Sue. She is a few years older than me and almost finishes her studies. Because of her better knowledge she could most of the time explain me the things we were seeing during the surgeries, during times I would not understand what was happening exactly and the doctors would be the busy at the moment. Sue even was allowed to make the stitches on the head of a patient, since she already had these skills. I did not unfortunately have any clinical experience yet in Holland, so I even refused to help with the stitches, also because I believe it was said by the Dutch exchange officer it is not allowed legally.

The health care in Poland has few similarities with Holland. It is for example obligated to have a health insurance. However there are of course differences as well: because of the long waiting lists for a treatment, you see a lot of private clinics spread around the city. Furthermore, going to the general practitioner is often skipped by people who can afford to go to a specialist directly themselves. In the neurosurgery department we mostly saw many different kinds of brain tumors and metastases or herniated discs. But one day it was extra interesting when we saw a skull reconstruction of the forehead, from a guy who broke and flattened this after an accident.

Besides the clinical program there were also many social activities organized by the Polish NICE-committee. Unfortunately my trip and also of a couple of others to Gdansk got cancelled, because there were not enough places for the trip. I did manage to go to the primeval forest of Białowieża, where I could see some wild animals like the bison. I also visited Krakow, a city with a beautiful castle close to the center and there is much history to be found from the Second World War, like Schindler's factory.





My main goal to pick a surgery department for my internship, was to find out whether I would like to become a surgeon in the future or not. I must admit that I am still not sure about this. Although it was an unforgettable experience, I think I would like to see other departments as well besides the neurosurgery, before making such an important decision. But these doubts do not change the fact that I was able to feel home quickly in Poland, the people there make sure you feel welcome. Now back in Holland, I remember my month in Poland as the perfect combination of an internship, as well as meeting people from all over the world and travelling during my summer holidays.





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