



Last September (1 September – 30 September 2015) I went to Ljubljana (Slovenia) for a clinical clerkship.

I was placed at the neonatology department in the pediatric hospital. I didn't have many expectations in advance, because I wasn't at a neonatal care unit before. My goals were to see a hospital in a different country, to get to know new people and to learn more about neonatology and see if this field fits me.

The Neonatology department has room for 15-20 patients. The hospital itself is very big. It has over 2000 beds and over 7000 employees, making it one of the largest hospitals in central Europe. I didn't see much of the hospital, because I spent my days in the pediatric hospital. This is a different building with 5 floors of departments in Pediatrics.

During this month I stayed in a dormitory. I shared a room with a student from Latvia. The dormitory was very big and there were a lot of foreign students. The rest of the exchange students (8 in total) stayed in the same dormitory. I was surprised how cheap it was to stay in a dormitory, for only 50 euros a month you could stay there.

Slovenia is a very beautiful country. In advance I didn't know much about Slovenia, but this country really surprised me in a positive way. Ljubljana is a small city (250.000), it is very clean and very safe.



During my four weeks my supervisor wanted to show me as much as possible from the pediatric clinic. First week I spent in Neonatology. Here they taught me a lot about the physical examination of the neonate and I got to practice a lot.

The second week I spent in Genetics and the Emergency department. I saw a lot of different hereditary syndromes and at the Emergency department I saw a lot of different acute patients. At this department I also saw a lot of organizational problems. The doctors of the Emergency departments had to go through a lot of problems to arrange everything for the patients. A simple ultrasound they have to ask for on paper, through the computer and they have to call the radiologist for it. So for 1 ultrasound, they have to ask for it in 3 ways. It also took a lot of time for lab results to come back.

The third week I spent in Pulmonology and Gastroenterology department. At



gastroenterology I saw a lot of endoscopies in very small children. The doctor showed me also all the objects kids had swallowed which had to be removed by endoscopy (hairclips, nails, coins and even a toothbrush). My last week I spent in Nefrology and Neurologie. At the neurology department I was invited to join the head of the department for a conference about Epilepsy and Sleep disorders, which was very interesting. My final days I went back to the Neonatology department and looked back on this month of internship with my supervisor.

It was really interesting for me to see so many different departments in pediatrics, because it gave me an overview of the work of doctors in pediatrics and I learnt a lot from it. What I really liked about the Neonatology department was their broad view on the patients. The only thing the patients have in common is that they are born too early. Besides that, you have to know a lot about every organ system and apply it to the newborn. The common rules of my supervisor were 'never trust the newborn' (the appearance is not always a good indication for their clinical status) and 'a newborn is not just a small adult'.

Besides my days in the hospital there was also enough time to have fun. We had a group of 8 exchange students and 3 Slovenian students who arranged a social program for us. The first week they showed us around in Ljubljana. We had an international Food & Drink party and an international music party. We went to Karaoke and also had a lot of outdoor activities (Volleyball, Hiking, Slacklining etc.). One weekend we made a bigger trip. They rented a van and we went to see Lake bled, Soca river, Kozje Waterfall, Vrsic pass and one of the biggest ski jumping hills in the world (Planica).

The Slovenian students were really kind and helpful and you could ask them for anything.



In a way Slovenia looks a lot like the Netherlands. The knowledge and opportunities in the hospital really surprised me. A big difference was in the organization in the hospital, which





was not always as efficient as possible. There was a nice atmosphere in the hospital; the doctors were all very kind to nurses, patients and students. One thing I noticed was the lack of rules about clothing in the hospital. I noticed a lot of doctors wearing rings, slippers, nail polish etc., which really surprised me. The language was sometimes a bit difficult, because their English was not always that good.



This exchange was a very valuable experience for me. It gave me the opportunity to learn in a foreign hospital and to explore the field of pediatrics. I'm glad I got to learn a lot of new and amazing people and that I had such an amazing time with them. This experience made me more confident to start in my upcoming clinical rotations.

