

Please contact the IT Officer at [it@insight.org.au](mailto:it@insight.org.au) to be put in touch with this placement participant for further information.

## Placement

Infectious diseases / General Medicine / Community Outreach, CMC Vellore, Vellore, India

## Dates of Placement

11 February 2019

## The Application Process

A PDF with the details to apply could be found online. You had to email an application to their office in India. The confirmation of the placement details can take months.

You also have to pay an application fee via a bank transfer to an Indian bank which was a bit complicated.

## Placement Structure / Typical Day

General medicine day:

Get up at 7 and eat at the campus canteen.

Get on the free shuttle bus between the residential campus where you live and the hospital campus. Navigate around the cows walking around the front of the hospital.

Ward round from 8-9. Then do ward jobs, unit meetings, consults, clinics according to your unit's schedule, similar to in Australia.

All team communication was in English and notes were in English, however most doctors spoke 3+ languages as the patients generally didn't speak English.

This is a very Christian hospital so all teams had mandatory bible study / prayer at least once per week.

Community outreach program: Different every day. Lots of home visits, school trips, remote clinics in smaller villages, post-discharge checkups or pre-natal checkups, etc.

## Level of Flexibility on the Placement

You could really attend whatever you wanted to.

Difficult to practice independently as most of the patients spoke Tamil or Hindi as a primary language.

If you were unhappy on your team or wanted to see a different field you could apply to change teams and this was generally processed within 24hrs.

There were also specific experiences you could attend that the elective students office would organize - eg a trip to the Leprosy hospital

## Expectations and Assessment

You could attend as much or as little as you wanted. Some people wanted to do 12hr days, other people took weeks off at a time.

The medical secretary will sign you off for your placement on any forms you need at the end without talking to anyone from the hospital.

## Skills Gained

The differences in healthcare decision making in a low-resource environment and how extreme poverty affects treatment.

Communicating with patients in basic Tamil.

Seeing lots of different clinical signs.

### **Placement Highlights**

The scale of the hospital (10,000 outpatients a day) and the clinical skill of the doctors working with minimal resources is incredible.

You will see amazing clinical signs and advanced disease that you'll never see again (eg in one day on Infectious disease: New HIV diagnosis, TB, foot acintomyces, leprosy, parasitic brain infections, japanese encephalitis, etc)

The leprosy hospital was incredible.

The friendliness of the people there was amazing.

You stay in a big hostel building with 20+ other international medical students who are great and there's a fantastic international student community.

### **Challenging Aspects of the Placement**

India is not a safe country to travel as a solo female. If you are white/female you will receive a lot of attention in the street in some places in India and this can get difficult to manage.

Vellore is a very conservative city and you have to dress conservatively - don't bring clinical clothes from home, buy a few kurtas and loose pants on day 1 from a local store to fit in. You cannot wear anything that shows your knees or legs, shoulders.

Alcohol is banned in Vellore.

Seeing extreme poverty was difficulty.

Seeing the very old-fashioned gender roles and attitudes to women was also really hard (eg lots of selective abortion of female babies).

### **Other Activities**

Weekend trips to local cities (Bangalore, Pondicherry, Chennai) - the electives office secretary can organize private cars for you to do this.

We took a few days off at the end to see the Taj Mahal which was fine with the college.

### **Would you recommend this placement to someone interested in global health?**

Definitely!! But be prepared for an experience.