

Sunena's CSMU Report

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I first learned about the possibility of coming to Chung Shan Medical University after meeting one of the CSMU students at UAB last year. It seemed that many of the Taiwanese medical students were taking advantage of the relationship between CSMU and UAB for several years. Unfortunately, our students at UAB have been missing out on this wonderful opportunity.

Once I decided to apply for the rotation, I also talked Wai Chin Foo, a UAB student who was the first to come to CSMU last year. He talked very highly of the exchange, and encouraged me to come. The process for getting everything arranged and getting to Taiwan was very simple because of the wonderful correspondence between Ms. Chen and Ms. Braswell.

I was a little nervous about coming to Taiwan because I did not know any Chinese. From the first day we got here, it was very apparent that everyone in Taiwan is so nice and friendly. People have helped us every step of the way.

My first week at CSMU was spent in the College of Oral Medicine . I spent one day in various different departments such as Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Periodontics, Orthodontics, and Oral Diagnosis. Everyone was very curious as to why I chose to spend a week in Dentistry since I am a medical student. When I first made this decision I did it because I felt like I did not have enough knowledge about oral diagnosis and pathology. After my week in the department, I realized that I was right, and it was very helpful to spend my week there. I think that here in Taiwan patients come to the College of Oral Medicine for any complaint of the oral cavity. In the United States patients often come to their doctor first with any kind of oral lesion or pain. Therefore, it is very important for us as physicians to be able to diagnose the common oral lesions in order to treat them or refer them to a specialist.

The next week I spent some time with the Department of Dermatology. Once again, I did not feel like I had enough of a knowledge base in this specialty. During our medical school teaching we only have about 1 week of lectures about Dermatology. Also, I have not done a clinical rotation in Dermatology, so I wanted to do it here at Chung Shan in order to learn a little bit more before I begin residency. After some very helpful introductory lectures from the residents, I spent the week observing in Dermatology clinics. During the course of the week I saw many cases of common skin lesions/diseases, and several rare lesions/diseases also. I think that Dermatology is a specialty that can only be learned by observation because you must be able to see the appearance of the skin in order to diagnose the lesion/disease. This comes with much practice, and seeing the same lesions/diseases over and over again until you can recognize it. As a pediatrician, I think it will be very important for me to be able to recognize skin rashes and lesions in order to determine their severity in relationship to a patient's illness.

Next, I spent a week in the Department of Occupational Medicine. This is a specialty that I chose because once again, we do not have much exposure to it in the United States. I think we have a few hours of lectures on some occupational diseases, but we really do not have a lot of clinical exposure. Also, I think occupational medicine is very different in the United States because there are not many doctors that specialize in it. Mostly people with a Master's in Public Health or nurses deal with occupational hazards and safety. A primary physician may see some of this in his/her clinic, but it is handled very differently.

I was able to spend my week visiting different industries in Taichung including the Central Taiwan Science Park Clinic where all of the employees in Science Park can come for any accident/injury or check up related to their work. I also spent one day at the Aerospace Industry Development Corporation where we were able to walk around the factories in order to assess the potential hazards and safety issues that must be considered for the employees of the corporation. I learned that it is very important for a doctor in Occupational Medicine to see the plant or factory so that they understand what things happen there and what kind of injuries/diseases can occur. That way, when they evaluate a patient they have a better idea about the situation. The last clinic I visited was the Health Center at CSMU where the employees of the hospital are evaluated. This is another great facility available at Chung Shan. During my week, I also had some discussion of Evidence Based Medicine with Dr. Lee which was helpful since as physicians we must always be able to research and understand medical literature.

Finally, I spent my last week in the Department of Pathology. Although we have a very long course in Pathology, I think it is very good to continue to learn their process of diagnosis. I was able to spend time with both the residents and attendings looking at many pathology slides. I watched some preparation of gross specimens in

order to understand what the pathologists are looking for and what information they need for diagnosis. Also, I had the opportunity to spend one day doing some immunohistochemical staining. This was a very interesting experience to see how the specimens are prepared for interpretation.

One of the main reasons I wanted to spend a month of my fourth year of medical school in another country is to see how the practice of medicine is different from the United States . In Taiwan because there is a unified culture, it plays a role in medical care and treatment. In the United States , there are so many cultures so it is difficult for us to incorporate this into our medical world. I think this is an important feature of medicine in Taiwan , and helps with the relationship between the patient and physician.

Overall my experiences at Chung Shan have been outstanding. All of the attendings, residents, and students are so helpful and willing to teach. My worry about not knowing any Chinese quickly disappeared when I saw how well the hospital staff could speak English, and how much they translated for us. It is an honor to be able to be a part of this exchange program. I am very thankful to all of the attendings for taking time out of their busy schedules to teach me, therefore bettering my medical knowledge. I am also so grateful to all of the people who made this trip possible for me. This is an experience that I will never forget.

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