

Medical Student Enrichment Program

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine

Clinical Elective: Taichung City, Taiwan – Chung Shan Medical University Hospital

Dates of Training: June 10, 2019 to July 7, 2019

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Date of Reflection: August 5, 2019

During my time at Chung Shan Medical University (CSMU) in Taichung City, Taiwan, I rotated through four different specialties to observe how the practice of medicine differed from how we practice it in the U.S. My first week there I was in Urology with a Chung Shan medical student. We would walk between three connected rooms each specializing in a different urological procedure.

We were in the middle room where ultrasound, biopsy, and prostate exams were done when an older male in his seventies came in who had just seen the doctor and needed a biopsy. We first examined the patient on ultrasound with the doctor pointing out and describing the black and white structures appearing on screen for us. Then the doctor had the patient undress and turn on his side and had us put on gloves. I barely had time to blink before I realized what was happening. The medical student I was with said nothing and immediately did the prostate exam. It was my turn and I did



not want to look incompetent especially as an exchange student representing UAB. I performed the exam and described the nodules I felt. To my surprise, the doctor said good job and then taught us about the patient's condition.

I later asked the CSMU student when she had learned how to do the exam and to my surprise she said she had not learned either. I realized then that I didn't have to know everything. That

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it would have been okay for me to explain that I had not yet learned but am willing to learn how. This happened on day two of being at CSMU and taught me a lesson that would be relevant throughout my time that I was there.

The next specialty I rotated in was General Surgery with and without robotic Da Vinci assistance. When I was told to scrub in, I was very frank in explaining how I did not know how. They eagerly taught me and before the end of the week, I needed no help doing so.

I loved my time in the hospital whether it was an eight to five day or an eight to eight twenty-four-hour day. I loved seeing how medicine is practiced in Taiwan, especially looking for differences since they are on a national healthcare system. But, nothing could beat the relationships built while I was there.

It started from the urology department's hospitality towards me. They treated me like family and it was sad to move on as my rotation ended with them. The same happened in every department, a heartbreak once a week.

During that time, the students also treated us as family. By the end of it all, we were all very good



friends. From early morning trips to go hiking to late night food runs at the night market, close friendships had formed during the short month I was there. What came next was the hardest part of the whole trip, saying goodbye. I went to every department trying to see as many of the doctors and nurses that made my trip amazing, also doing the same with the CSMU students. But in the end, they were never really goodbyes. The relationships built in Taiwan were built to be that of future colleagues, not just transient friends. As we said our "see



you later," we knew our paths would cross again.

Kevin Lee

