

## **Intensive Care Unit and Anaesthetic Department, Royal Melbourne Hospital, Melbourne**

I spent my six-week medical elective at the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Australia. My elective was divided into four weeks within the Intensive Care Unit, and two weeks within the Anaesthetic Department.

### ICU Placement

My previous limited experience of ICU was during Covid-19 pandemic where I was deployed as a Health Care Assistant. Therefore, I was greatly looking forward to this placement to further my knowledge of intensive care medicine. I saw many interesting cases. For example, the management of a patient with refractory status epilepticus, where unusual treatments were implemented including Electro-Convulsive therapy, novel surgical interventions, and other treatments with limited evidence base. I witnessed challenging discussions regarding management and saw how compromise is often needed for complex cases. An aspect of ICU care that I found thought-provoking during my placement was the consideration of ethical dilemmas, such as end of life decisions, family discussions, and ceilings of care. I was invited to sit in on difficult family meetings and watch consultants lead conversations regarding managing expectations and realistic prognoses.

I attended the twice weekly consultant led teaching sessions for doctors in the department. Topics varied from managing snake bites to airway management. I participated in these sessions and enjoyed learning practical skills such as placing central lines on models. The ICU doctors were keen to teach, and I learnt to place cannulas under ultrasound. I was encouraged to examine patients on the ICU ward round and by the end of the placement I felt more confident and had a greater grasp of examining patients and assessing GCS. I have an ICU job in my FY2 year, and I look forward to putting these skills into practice again.

### Anaesthetics Placement

During my anaesthetics placement I was encouraged to perform practical procedures such as placing cannulas, pre-oxygenation, and intubation. Through this placement I have a greater understanding of the medications used in anaesthesia, ventilator settings and feel more confident performing procedures including airway manoeuvres. A highlight was watching open heart surgery on my last day. The consultant anaesthetist took time to explain the procedure, cardiac physiology, and the mechanisms of the complex equipment used. I felt privileged to see such an interesting aspect of anaesthetics I have not previously been exposed to.

### Australia

Outside of placement, I had a fantastic time in Australia. I was able to visit Sydney, the Whitsunday islands, and the Great Barrier Reef. I also enjoyed sights more local to Melbourne such as the Yarra Valley, the Great Ocean Road, and watching Australian Football League games.

During my time in Melbourne, I reconnected with Australian friends from my gap year in Israel, one of whom is a medical student in Melbourne. I enjoyed comparing experiences with her and hearing about the differences between being a Jewish medical student in Australia to the UK. She invited me to Shabbat and Yom Tov lunches where I met other young people and learnt more about the young Melbourne Jewish community. I spent Shabbat and Shavuot with family friends who are a Rabbi and Rebbetzin in Melbourne. I enjoyed attending the local synagogue with them and spending time within the Melbourne Jewish community. Everyone was incredibly warm and welcoming, and I look forward to coming back to Melbourne in the future and strengthening these connections.

### Thanks

I would like to thank the Jewish Medical Association for their generous scholarship and for the student JMA events I have enjoyed throughout medical school. I am very grateful for the JMA's help towards making my elective possible.

Nicola Bowman (UCL)