

My elective at KKU, Khon Kaen (Thailand)

After my 4th year of studying medicine at the Medical University of Vienna I have made a 4-weeks elective in my summer holidays at the Emergency Department of the Srinagarind Hospital in Khon Kaen, Thailand.

In the following report I write about my experiences and what I could learn during my stay in this wonderful country.

First, I describe my time and impressions I've experienced at the Emergency Medicine department. In general, I chose the department of EM for my voluntary elective, because I thought that this might be a good and various unit for getting to know about another countries' culture and people and of course, because I am mostly interested in this field of medicine.



Usually, I stayed at the department during the morning shifts in the Resuscitation Room, where I could watch and interpret all urgent and severe cases coming in. The doctors tried to explain me a lot about the concerns of the patients and were engaged to include me in their work and plans. I could make many physical examinations, take some blood gases, or assist at other practical skills like setting catheters and so on. In the afternoons I also could stay at the resuscitation or examination rooms or join some lectures or bedside-teaching with the other students. I could gain some knowledge and hands-on at Ultrasound abdominal as well



ECHO. Additionally, I could improve getting a first, quick impression of the severity of a patient's condition and regarding the interpretation of ECGs and Xray's I could increase my knowledge.

Moreover, I could learn a lot about specific emergency duties such as intubation, pleural taps, the acute treatment of some illnesses and conditions as well as in setting differential diagnoses.

What was different from here to my home hospital is, that in this hospital they have only one big EM unit, where every case is coming in first. In Vienna however, the patients already get separated in advance – so there is one unit for the children, one for internal cases, one for stroke suspicions as well as an own

department for trauma cases. This will have positive and negative aspects; however, I liked the variety during my experience here. I also had the impression that the system here on the EM in general is structured more efficient and people don't have to wait that long as in Austria... but I couldn't really identify the cause for this perception so far... but what impression I could notice is, that people here are just living more in the moment and don't think that much about future and past... so maybe this might make people here just dealing



in a more efficient and fast way.

In addition to that I had the impression that I could see here more severe cases at the hospital then compared to e.g., my home hospital in Vienna. On the one hand in the number of cases and otherwise also

in the intensity of the cases. I think this might be, because people in Austria just go to the hospital already in earlier states, and sometimes also in not that urgent and necessary cases... What is maybe good in one point, because some severe scenarios can be avoided or at least treated earlier, but on the other side it might be also a kind of additional stress to the health care system in my home country. Furthermore, I think that due to the higher amount of obesity and overweight we also have a lot of cases regarding metabolic issues and results. So, in Austria I saw till now more cases in the same field and a higher amount of elderly people in the EM. The higher amount of trauma cases and younger people here might be caused due to the traffic and in general safety of infrastructure in Thailand – of course, all just assumptions. Also, the imbalance of rich and poor people might cause some of the more severe states of patients I could notice here...

Due to the existing language barrier, I think that I could strengthen my empathy and improve using other senses in understanding people and knowledge. It was quite interesting to notice how understanding is possible without using words.

Another, maybe sometimes bit depressive perception, I had to experience, was, that especially compared to what I already can do and how I can act supportive in my home country, I felt sometimes a bit useless... This was in some moments a bit exhausting and sad for me, but of course thats nobody's fault, and is just caused by the language barrier. Nevertheless, I think due to this I could strengthen my patience and it also made me feel really valued from the staff here, because they still invested their time in me although I couldn't be a big support in many cases.

Now to my impressions and experiences all around the medical part in the hospital. When I've arrived, it already started with such a welcoming meet up at the airport, where two thai

students picked me up and went out for a traditional Thai dinner with me. I felt immediately included and as a part of the group. Also, the introduction day and my first days at the department of EM were a really positive experience for me. Everybody was so engaged to support me in all my needs and guaranteed I have a good time staying here.

In my free time I made many sporty activities with the other Thai and international students such as jogging, exercising, yoga and so on. We also went to many dinners and night markets out together and had a great time enjoying Thailand's amazing food. We also were visiting many cultural places, such as temples and enjoyed the beautiful nature with some adventurous hikes and culinary trips.



Beside my 4 weeks in Khon Kaen I also could spend two weeks travelling in the south of Thailand, where I could explore many beautiful places of this country. While I started my trip in Bangkok, I could get an intense and busy first impression of this land's lifestyle. But already here I felt a warm, welcoming, and kind behavior of all the locals. I made amazing experiences with the unbelievable good food and the delicious variety of fruits and vegetables. I continued my journey southwards to the beautiful Nationalpark Khao Sok and moved on to Phuket, where I spend a few days around the beachside and made some



cultural discoveries and started my days with good surf sessions in the morning. After that I took a ferry to the island of Koh Phi Phi and from there, I went on to Krabi, where I've ended up my travelling before I headed up to Khon Kaen. During this time, I could enjoy stunning beaches, amazing food, good Thai massages and felt already in love with the Thai way of people are acting as well as cooking 😊

I really appreciate the way how Thai people respect each other. But unfortunately, in some cases, I also could notice that this respect is also taking place in a maybe too focused way, what has in my point of view some damaging effects such as fear, shame, and other mental results. I hope, there will be some development regarding a less hierarchic structure...

However, I have the impression that Thai people are more polite and mindful among each other, what I really loved to see and feel.

The people I got to know were really friendly regarding tourists and they always tried to make my time here to an unique and positive experience – they invited me for some activities, got me to taste incredible good food and taught me some values of the Asian culture. All in all, I had an amazing time here and I am really happy that I was allowed making this experience.

A big thanks to everybody for the lovely support at Srinagarind Hospital and who made my stay in Khon Kaen to an unforgettable and formative memory. I hope to come back to Thailand in the future once again and can enjoy more of this lovely country's people, culture and landscape.

