



Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University
Siriraj Resident/Fellow Exchange Program

University of Pennsylvania, United States of America
From 1st December to 24th December 2019



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Overseas Clinical Elective Rotation Final Report

Introduction

Currently I am on my 4th year residency training in the Department of Dermatology, Faculty of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University. During this time, we are assigned of a few months for elective rotation. I was lucky enough to have been on an elective rotation on my 5th year of medical school and had been to the plastic surgery division in Slovenia for a month. During that time I had a very good experience and learned a lot about the new treatment and skills, so when the time came for another opportunity to be in a world-renowned hospital to explore the new treatment modalities of the specialty I am currently studying, I have no hesitation to apply for this scholarship.

University Review

The Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania located in the University Center part of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania State. It is the oldest medical school founded in 1765. It has ranked as the 3rd best medical school in research division and 10th in primary care. Dermatology is one of its strong department in terms of colleagues, professors, and researches. It has been a well-known department all across the world. It is filled with many world-class professors specialized in all subspecialty of Dermatology. With that being said, it was a great opportunity for me to attend.

Expectation and Objective

My main objective for this elective rotation is to see beyond what Thailand has to offer at the time being. I believe Dermatology, and medicine as a whole, is always developing. New knowledge, medication, diagnosis, pathophysiology of a disease has been discovered every day. United State of America is known for its advancing technologies and treatment modalities. Perelman School of Medicine is one of the best medical school in the US at the moment. Dermatology department is still a growing unit, with a lot of unexplained diseases that has just been recently been discovered for the treatment. However, nowadays more recent treatments that are available in the United States has not reached to Thailand, and therefore our current treatment may not be sufficient to treat some of the common disease I examine on daily basis. For example, psoriasis, which accounts in about 1-2% of population worldwide. Psoriasis has just recently been discovered its pathogenesis, therefore newer drugs and targeted therapy are being tested and used. In Thailand, those biologics treatments are extremely expensive and not commonly used in psoriatic patient in Siriraj Hospital. On contrary to the US where biologics are much more accessible and available to the patients and included in its health insurance. That's the main reason I attended this elective, because I believe in a few years to come, those biologics or targeted therapy will soon arrive and be much more commercially available for Thai patients so it's better for me to get a head start when I have a chance.

Knowledge/Experience gained

As I mentioned earlier, the main objective for this elective period is to see newer treatments and technologies, to see how dermatologists work and treat their patients on the most common basic diseases which I have wholeheartedly experienced. During my rotation, I

was assigned to different professors and mentors, each of which specialized in different department of Dermatology so that I can encounter a lot of diseases and got to see how each and every one treated their patients. I was lucky enough to have my mentors here at my department who also got this same opportunity and had previous elective rotation at this very same hospital, so she contacted the physicians at the University of Pennsylvania for me. Professor George Cotsarelis who is currently a chairperson of the department whom was my main supervisor. He is specialized in hair diseases and had published numerous studies. During my rotation there, I have a privilege to shadowing him from 3 days.

The main knowledge that I learned is mainly the treatment on what's commonly seen, both in Siriraj Hospital, and in the University of Pennsylvania. For example, atopic dermatitis, which is common among our populations. The new biologics, specifically, dupilumab which targeted on interleukin 4 and interleukin 13 which are the main pathogenesis of atopic dermatitis. It showed great result in numerous patients. Dupilumab is still considered as an expensive treatment here in Siriraj and only been used on a few patients. I also learned on how to prophylaxis the patients prior to their biologic injections. Biologics are immunosuppressive therapy, so in order to inject those medication, vaccinations and laboratory investigations are required. I got to see how they consultation to the patients and how they communicate between doctor and patient relationship. Though during that time it was too short for me to see the follow up changes, it was still a good experience to encounter the real patients that received those treatments.

Not only the clinical part, while I was there, I had an opportunity to attend their grand rounds and teaching classes. Each session was delicately and well planned. You got to see a variety of patients both in person and pictures. Differential diagnosis was discussed and plan of management was made from a lot of faculty members. Studying in class were interesting, the residents there were well prepared and participate in a lot of discussion in class. I also had a chance to see interesting inpatient cases while I was there. Histopathology session was quite interesting, over at Hospital of University of Pennsylvania, the dermatopathologists would come up with different "quiz" slides and had the residents prepared 1 week prior to the discussion, and the mentors would quickly go through each slides once a week, so you have to be prepared before the discussion to keep track with the classroom.

In-depth Comparison of Education

The main different thing I saw when I was there was how involved the residents were in class and how ambitious they were in front of their mentors. There's no right and wrong answers and the mentors showed no sign of frustration when the residents got their answer wrong. I think that's the main reason the residents are more liberated to answer the question. The teaching and grand rounds opened the floor for everyone to discuss and participate, and to be a part of a management. Professors were welcoming for suggestions and ideas from the residents therefore urged the residents to study and prepared for their class. Though the knowledge learned between Siriraj Hospital may not be that much of a different, I believe how the class atmosphere was and the relationship between the mentors and the residents were the main different between each campus.

The other part I found interesting is how little responsible the residents have in terms of presentations and assignments. With less time they spent doing assignments, it allows them to focus more on their studying.

In-depth Comparison of Technology

From Dermatology point of view, what I have experienced, I found not that much of a difference in an area of technology. Siriraj Hospital, especially Dermatology Department, is also outstanding for the technology used to treat the patients. All the laser machines at Siriraj Skin Laser Center (SiSL) are equal, if not, surpass those available in the Hospital of Pennsylvania. But from a service point of view, the system and program they use to write the information and prescribe the medication to the patients are beyond astonishing. The system they use can recall previous data and make an appointment to the patients including online chat with the patients and receiving information or pictures directly from the patients. It allows you to withdraw information from other hospital and from other physicians. All leads to a much more easiness to reach their personal profiles and more convenient to treat the patients more holistically.

In-depth Comparison of Technique

While I was observing at a Hospital of Pennsylvania, I had a chance to witness some different techniques used, though might not be a total or complete difference from Siriraj Hospital. For example, the way they inject triamcinolone acetonide intralesionally in patients with alopecia areata, the doctors there tend to inject more superficially and more frequently than how we did it here. Another example is the aesthetics treatment and dermatosurgery, at Hospital of Pennsylvania, the doctors tend to perform shave biopsy rather than incisional biopsy like we do in Siriraj hospital, the reason behind this is due to their need only for the confirmatory result and they can move on to Mohs surgery. Shave biopsy were less likely to develop scars and it can be performed more quickly.

Another different technique in contact dermatitis clinic that I experienced was their tools to put on allergen and the database they collect their allergens from. At Hospital of Pennsylvania, they develop a program called CAMP database which includes many commercially available products so that they can give a handout and information about the product that doesn't contain the allergic allergen to the patients.

Benefits

Overall, I had fulfilled the objective of this elective rotation completely. I have accessed to their treatment methods to more common diseases and saw the different prescriptions compared to Thailand. I think it is crucial for physicians to be active and prepare for the newer medication and treatment options that soon will be available in Thailand. Other than that, just to be a part of an Ivy League college in one of the renowned hospital universities has been truly a surreal experience of mine. I have made contact with some of the professors and residents which is nice to keep in touch with abroad physicians.

Life in abroad

I booked an AirBNB of an apartment close by the hospital and also a tram which is one of the public transportation used to travel around. It is a single bedroom, a bathroom with refrigerator and a microwave. The good thing about this place is the accommodation. I could easily walk to the hospital which took around 20 minutes and around 2 minutes from the tram station. Living by myself gave me a time to grow up a little. Luckily I met a colleague who

pointed me out to the great restaurants. On weekends and Christmas, I was fortunate enough to have Thai friends over for a visit, which made my experience over there even better. I dined out most of the nights and bought a few groceries for an easy breakfast meals.

Future plan

Since I am a free-training resident, my goal is to based myself here in Bangkok, specifically near my parents' house so that I could take care of them. I always have a passion for the disease side of Dermatology so I think I will settle with a private hospital which offer available time to take care of my parents.

Recommendations

I think Hospital of University of Pennsylvania is an excellent hospital to visit. Just to see an atmosphere and the history of this astonishing hospital is enough reason to go. People are extremely friendly and helpful, they accept the different in cultural and doesn't mind when you ask any questions. However, I recommend somewhere near the city center where you can go grab a dinner and near the shopping center rather than close to the hospital, for coming to the hospital itself is quite convenient with many public transportation nearby.

This program has been an amazing experience of mine and I think the only thing I could ask for more is to extend my stay.