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Exchange to Mälardalen University Eskilstuna.

Study period - autumn 2012 (1.9.2012- 1.12.2012)

Description of clinical Placement

In Mälarsjukhuset Eskilstuna 4 weeks in ward 62 V Child and Youth care, and

4 weeks in ward 72 N Medicine or Nephrology

Information prior to departure

Before departing from Finland, my teacher in Jyväskylä and also Eskilstuna have provided me with information about the Swedish lifestyle, the environment that I am going to work and live, and they assured me of any help they could give to make my stay in Sweden memorable. I was required to have a screening for MRSA before starting my clinical practice in Sweden. My university in Sweden instructed me to book a room in advance to have things settled before my arrival. I could say that both my teachers in Finland and Sweden have provided me with necessary information I needed prior to my departure.

Reception

Despite of my absence during the introductory ceremony, I was accommodated by the international coordinator of MDH and she handed me my schedule for my practice during my entire stay in Sweden and a map of the city and some relevant instructions on how to get to the hospital that I'm going to work. She also gave a name of the contact person in the hospital and assisted me to get my ID card and access code to the university library. As I started my first day of work, my supervisor in the hospital welcomed me and gave me a tour in the hospital as well as some of the patients' conditions.

Study environment

Twice a week I was having a lecture in the school campus for two hours and have my practice four to five times in a week for eight hours. There were 8 students in our class including me and most of them are from other countries in Europe and some are from the U.S. We did have group works and presentation, and also a take home exam. I could say that we were given enough assistance by our teacher since we were not that many in our class. It was also nice to work and chat with my classmates there because we shared the same conditions and expectations as exchange students in that university. We did learn from each other not only during our class lectures and home works but also thru our experiences back in our home university and country.

With regards to my study environment in the hospital, I could say that it was a good experience to work in a different place with different people and also different language. The system in Finland was quite similar to Sweden but since I understood Swedish better than Finnish then it was easy for me to communicate not only with my colleagues but also with patients. In this case, I could say that I didn't have a hard time building a relationship with the people that I worked with and nurse.

Self- evaluation

To me, my exchange study in Sweden was a positive experience. Working in a multicultural environment, with very compassionate and reliable colleagues made my stay more enjoyable. Although I made few mistakes while on duty, it was a good learning process for me since the staffs were very kind and helpful to assist me and I did learn a lot from them. I managed to make myself familiar with the working condition in medical departments in Sweden and how they deal with every situation in the hospital. Also, the language did not serve as a hindrance to my learning but instead, it has improved my language skills and increased my confidence in speaking Swedish as I follow conversations.

Housing

The housing condition was quite impressive. I got all the facilities I needed as a typical student like access to the internet, study table in my room, I enjoyed my privacy, and most especially the people that I shared the building with were so friendly. I did the booking for my room while I was in Finland and the people in-charge with the housing for foreign students in Sweden has offered me a room which was next to the university building and the city center. My place was just 2 minutes walk away from the metro station and 5 minutes away from the city lagoon where I enjoyed having my morning run. There was also a free parking area around 500 meters away from the building where I stayed. Aside from having my own bedroom with a small bathroom inside, I shared kitchen with those who also live in the building and we did have our common room as well where we can invite friends, family or colleagues and have a good time together. My room was built in way that despite of being located at the city center, you won't hear the noise outside and I can have a glimpse of the city from my window.

As I was enjoying my stay in Sweden, I find the place expensive to stay as a student because the room was quite expensive compared to the budget I received from our university funds as part of my exchange study.

Economy

Economically speaking, the living condition in Sweden is quite similar to Finland. The food prices were cheaper in grocery stores compared to Finland, and the food in restaurants were also at reasonable prices. As a student, I got a card from the university which entitles me to have a free travel to the nearby city called Västerås. As a student or foreigner, you only need to have a good budget for housing if you want to have a decent place and live close to the city. There were plenty of restaurants in the area owned and run by foreigners like Indian, Chinese, Italian, etc., and they compete with the locally owned business enterprise.

Culture

The Swedish culture is not different compared to other countries in Scandinavia in the sense that their language is quite similar to Norway where I have also lived for some years. Swedish were very friendly and love to communicate with other people. They provide good services whether in shops, restaurants, hospitals, and other business establishments. The location where I stayed was a mix of Scandinavians and other foreigners as well coming from Asia and some parts of Africa. Many people can speak English especially the locals so; it's not difficult to be a foreigner in Sweden. Since I have some knowledge and skills in speaking Norwegian and Swedish, I noticed that people enjoyed more chatting with me in their language.

There was also some group of people who were very reserved like they don't talk to people very often. But when you approach them they are also ready to talk and help you in their way. The Swedish have a good social life. Despite of their busy schedules, they take time to go out and have lunch with their friends, families, and colleagues.

Transport

Since I stayed very close to the train and bus station, my access to transportation was not an issue. As I take some classes to another city which is Västerås, I was given a free student pass to take the bus. Train tickets were pretty expensive if you want to visit some small towns nearby and you need to book your ticket in advance before boarding the train. Since I have my car with me, I normally travel by car to visit some friends in other areas.

Language

As I have mentioned, Swedish and some foreigners in the area were good English speakers so it was not really a problem for me. Since I understand some Scandinavian languages, I managed to communicate well with my colleagues in the hospital and I

believed that it was a better experience for me working in Sweden than in Finland as far as the language is concerned. Although I still have some problem following certain conversation every time they talk very fast and in a unique accent, people are still easy to get along with.

Teacher/Tutor Nurse Feedback

During my practice I received good assistance from my teacher/supervisor. To ensure the learning condition and well-being of the students including me, the teacher visits us once a week and we gather and sit together to discuss what we have learned during the week, or if there are any issues we want to deal with. And hearing my colleagues' experiences also helps me to love my job more and learn from them at the same time. My nurse tutor was very helpful to me as well and helps me deal with some problems I encounter at my workplace. She explains to me those things that I needed to remember as I deal with patients and also taught me things that I haven't learned from before. She was also very kind and patient to correct me every time I make some mistakes.

Good advice/suggestions for improvement

I think being a new comer to a new city can be very challenging. And international students could enjoy their stay in another country if they will have someone to accompany them as they explore the place, the culture, the language, the transportation methods, etc. Of course there are students who want to explore things by themselves but for sure there will also be some who wants to do it with others or with the help of other people in the area. So, I would recommend that having a student buddy for new comers is necessary. The purpose of having a student buddy will not only ease the anxiety that international students may feel after arriving to a new place but it also helps them to gain friends, ease their homesickness and feel belong, be familiarize with the system in their new school, and also to build a relationship with someone even though the exchange study period is over.