**Michelle Cooper**

**medical student and scholarship recipient**

**BEING ABLE** to witness healthcare in a developing country was inspiring and so rewarding. My heart goes out to the doctors and nurses who do such an incredible job with such limited resources.

My first experience was in the General and Digestive Surgery Department. This 60 bed ward consisted of 79 patients, several were sharing beds, yet no one wore anything but a smile. The importance of family in healthcare was highlighted with family members assisting with basic healthcare to their loved ones.

*From day one, I scrubbed in theatre as first assistant, fortunately my background as a nurse helped tremendously.*

By the end of the first week, I was closing surgical wounds and having a passion for surgery. I was in heaven and I learned more than I ever dreamed possible as a medical student. Special thanks go to Drs. Dung, Thang and Duong and to all the staff whose friendships I value. They provided me with so many medical and surgical experiences and showed me Vietnamese culture, hospitality and valuable language interpretation.

My next experience was in Obstetrics and Gynaecology where I assessed labouring women and assisted with deliveries and caesarian sections. At times it became overwhelming and I am grateful to Dr Kong and his colleagues who made me feel comfortable and part of the team.

*On occasion it was also confronting, witnessing some basic procedures without anaesthetic and having family members praying to you to save their loved ones.*

In Australia we are so fortunate and until now, I don’t think my eyes were really opened to just how much.

The Học Mãi Foundation has fulfilled the opportunity of a lifetime for me and for that, I will be forever grateful. I feel privileged to have received such a scholarship.

**NEW Corporate support for Học Mãi**

The 2007 Christmas Appeal has enlisted a new area of support in the form of VN Holidays of Sunshine, Victoria.

Managing Director, Vincent Le, stated that for every person who books travel to Vietnam through VN up to June 30, 2008, his company will donate $10. The total raised from this generous gesture will be paid to the Học Mãi Foundation at the end of this financial year.

*So, if you’re planning to fly to Vietnam, book through VN and help build a sizable donation.*

**COMING EVENTS**

**APRIL - HANOI**

Professor Kerry Goulston will lead a team in ‘Teaching Medical English’ at Bach Mai Hospital, Hanoi.

**MAY - CASULA POWERHOUSE THEATRE**

A fund-raising function in the presence of Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir. Governor of NSW.

**PERFORMANCE OF ‘KEATING’**

Friday, 16 May 2008, 6:30pm for canapés & cocktails

Cost: $100

Details: Rhondda Glasson  0434 565 606  (rglasson@med.usyd.edu.au)

**APPLICATIONS**

are now being accepted from 2nd & 3rd year University of Sydney medical students for scholarships for clinical placement in hospitals in Vietnam for 2008.

**JULY - STUDENTS ARRIVE**

Three Vietnamese students from Hanoi Medical University will arrive 4 July, to commence a clinical placement within the Northern Clinical School of University of Sydney.

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**VN Holidays**

a preferred wholesaler of Vietnam Airlines

Reservations ph 1300 309 117

vnholidays.com.au
In 2007, a group of students from the Northern Clinical School at RNSH visited hospital facilities in Hanoi and Danang and came away with a very positive collective view:

For each of us the Vietnam experience had its different highlights. In our studies to come neurosurgeons, colorectal surgeons, nephrologists, obstetricians, paediatricians and emergency medicine doctors, each of us were touched by the doctors who took time out of their busy day to teach and inspire us.

The relationships we forged with the Vietnamese doctors and students truly embodied the notion of Học Mãi: forever learning. There was a real willingness to engage in the exchange of professional and cultural knowledge. There was a genuine interest in each of us individually, about living in Australia and our experience of being in Vietnam.

Medically, we were exposed to a wide range of disease and pathology that is rarely seen in Australia. We were able to participate in surgery, ward rounds and clinics, all of which provided a great opportunity to put into practice the teaching we have received in the past two years of medical school. For medical students who are about to embark on the clinical years, the experience was invaluable.

We thank the Học Mãi Foundation and its generous supporters for giving us this wonderful opportunity.

How you can donate…

1 Complete & return the coupon in the enclosed post-paid envelope.
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ÓC MÃI supporters who generously supported our 2007 Christmas Appeal, two Vietnamese medical students have had the opportunity to study at Royal North Shore Hospital.

One of those students tells about her experience…

I was very anxious about going to Australia but when I arrived, I was greeted warmly at the airport by Học Mãi’s, Rhondda Glasson who made me very welcome.

I’m so grateful to the Học Mãi Foundation for according me such a wonderful opportunity and I was very keen to learn more about clinical medicine related to eye diseases.

I studied at the Eye Clinic at Royal North Shore Hospital where my supervisor, Timothy Roberts, the registrars and the optometrists all gave me enthusiastic support. I was able to study case histories and examine patients and anything I didn’t understand was explained to me. I was very interested in the doctors’ behaviour and courtesy towards patients that made them feel more comfortable during their stay in hospital.

I was also able to observe cataract surgeries and best of all, to watch and assist one of the surgeons during a cornea operation. That made me extremely happy.

The Australian medical students were very friendly. I learned a lot from them. They included me in their study groups which was a great learning experience. I enjoyed this form of study very much and I will ask my fellow Vietnamese students to form such groups.

I love the Australian culture, the environment and some of the fabulous sights like the Opera House, Darling Harbour, Wildlife World and Aquarium… Sydney is such a beautiful and peaceful city.

Overall, I learned far more than I thought possible. The time I spent at Royal North Shore has enriched my love for ophthalmology and I hope to return to Australia some day in the future.

Thank you to the Board of the Học Mãi Foundation for giving me the chance to further my studies.

Northern Clinical School students full of praise for Scholarship Program

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Reflections of Tran Thu Huong

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