

SIR ZELMAN COWEN UNIVERSITIES FUND
HEBREW UNIVERSITY MEDICAL ELECTIVE TERM FELLOWSHIP

Report To Trustees

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*An elective in Orthopaedics and Intensive Care
at Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Centre
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I chose to take my elective term at Hadassah Medical centre for many reasons: to be in Israel, to study in an internationally renowned trauma and research centre, and to experience medicine as it is practised in the spirit and environment of Israel. So with the generous support of the Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund, I spent two months learning medicine and life in Hadassah's Orthopaedic and Intensive Care departments. There I found many wonderful personal and professional contacts, brought back much inspiration, and made many promises to return.

Hadassah Ein Kerem crowns the hills of west Jerusalem as a modern and vibrant teaching hospital. I found an inspiring atmosphere in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual facility, where at least five languages are spoken simultaneously throughout the hospital, but compassionate medicine and humour are universal and binding and surpass all socio-linguistic barriers.

Upon my arrival, I was invited to attend an international Orthopaedics convention in Tel Aviv the following day. Thus my prologue to Hadassah was a showcase of current and future orthopaedic innovations, including presentations from some of the doctors from Ein Kerem. Here I also met several of the Professors and doctors, who were very happy to have a student from Australia; many of the doctors there had undertaken their fellowship in Sydney, and there is an ongoing strong professional relationship between our

departments. I suspect they were likewise proud to be able give me this prestigious introduction to Orthopaedics in Israel.

My real initiation to the hospital was much less formal, as the doctors helped me to arrange my term so that I would find from it exactly what I wanted to learn and experience. Our aim was that I would gain an appreciation of the entire clinical process from triage to treatment and the underlying principles of decision-making. Thus, I spent time in trauma emergency, outpatient clinics, ward rounds, operating theatres and department meetings. In between, I experienced part of the educational process, attending resident teaching sessions and a slice of the medical student program of Hebrew University. I was also invited to join the rehabilitation unit and to visit Alyn (the hospital and rehabilitation centre for physically handicapped children), although unfortunately I did not have time on this visit.

The Orthopaedic residents took me under their wing during many evening shifts in the emergency department, in trauma assessment, examination, fracture management and plastering. It was a very good opportunity to review orthopaedic radiology and clinical examination, and I received excellent teaching from the chief residents. They taught me assessment of road trauma and potential spinal cord injuries, triage and principles of ordering orthopaedic radiology. I felt my participation was limited to an extent by language; although this I

suspect was more of a psychological than an actual barrier as many of the patients speak English, and many do not speak Hebrew either.

I attended several outpatient clinics, including joint, foot and ankle, shoulder and spinal clinics. The doctors translated or conducted the clinic in English if they were able, and explained as much as they could during or between consultations. Teaching was excellent, as was the chance to review clinical examination. As with patients I met in the Emergency Department, I was able to follow some patients into the operating theatre, to the ward, and back to outpatient follow up.

The early morning ward rounds were often a good place to learn patient management and general medicine, with both esoteric and more generic wisdom shared with us by the attending consultant. Here I encountered the strong research drive of the doctors who are drawn to Hadassah, as for almost every patient, the Professor would make a reference to current research, and quote me the results of the pertinent study. I was impressed by the extent to and enthusiasm with which this was incorporated into so many discussions, particularly with students. I encountered this drive to incorporate research and technology through the different levels in many departments, and experienced it first hand in the operating theatres.

The operating rooms of Hadassah are a lively world, with warm interactions between doctors, patients, nurses and allied staff, and where at least Hebrew, Arabic, English and Russian are spoken at the same time. I scrubbed in for spinal, foot, paediatric and hand surgeries and joint replacements; and I was given some opportunities to cut, stitch, or drill. Some of the surgeons took a large amount of time to explain processes, anatomy and radiology, and in teaching me to operate, particularly the spinal surgeons. They were proud to show me computer-assisted navigation, in the development of

which, the doctors of Hadassah Ein Kerem have played, and are still playing, a prominent international role. In particular, I saw percutaneous compression plating (PCCP), a home-grown Israeli innovation, used in intertrochanteric fracture of the femur. I was also given the chance to participate in navigation-assisted spinal surgery and insertion of pedicle screws; the spinal team used photos of my participation in their presentation at the department meeting - 'even our students can participate in this technology'.

The second month I spent in the Intensive Care and Anaesthetic departments, as well as a brief tour through the different operating rooms. In the Intensive Care Unit I saw more acutely the pressures of a busy tertiary trauma centre with limited beds and a constant flow of patients, but also a morale that fought well to match these pressures. The ICU team was very keen to involve me in the care of patients, and therefore this was also a good learning term to be thrown into. The morning rounds I attended were conducted in Hebrew, but patience was worthwhile as afterward I was allocated a couple of patients each morning to check, assess, write up and discuss. We each presented our patients in the noon round led by a professor, with lengthy teaching discussions usually conducted in English. I found I quickly had to learn and pick up the principles of ventilation and intensive care management, as well as dust off my knowledge of general medicine. In the afternoons here I was given the opportunity to practice procedural skills, although I tended to spend my time in the operating rooms instead.

From here I migrated into Anaesthetics, where I found a very approachable team of doctors who were willing and happy to teach. I was rotated through the operating rooms with different Anaesthetists, who each shared with me their gems of wisdom and taught me the principles and problems of anaesthetics, paediatric anaesthetics and procedural skills. I also briefly visited some

of the other departments to which I was warmly invited, before exploring the rest of Israel outside the hospital walls. I saw a slice of neurosurgery, procedures in Ear Nose and Throat, and some general and plastic surgery. Even when venturing outside my departments, I found most doctors happy to explain and share their wisdom.

I met several local students in the operation rooms or on shifts in emergency, and took the opportunity to experience part of their medical program and join in their lectures and tutorials while they were on the rotation. My participation in these classes was limited to an extent due to language; however the students translated for me when they could, and sometimes the smaller tutorials were even conducted in English for my benefit. I was very touched by these efforts made to help me understand, being often the only foreign student present. Despite these communications issues, I found attending these few classes gave me some insight also into the Hebrew University's medical program. I was impressed by the standard of teaching and smooth integration of practical work with theory. From what I could tell, for each subspecialty there was an effective conjunction of the lectures and the relevant clinical experiences, with relatively small class sizes in lectures and tutorials allowing for interaction between students and doctors. Outside of the tour of their lecture theatres, the students took me on some beautiful tours of the countryside, that I would be privileged to reciprocate in Sydney should any visit.

Besides the medicine itself, Hadassah hospital is a rich environment with its heritage and cultural colour. I met doctors who had immigrated to Israel from all corners of the earth, wonderful Arab doctors and a mix of doctors and patients from other religious and cultural backgrounds. Communication was therefore a shared adventure, where all attempts to communicate were appreciated and respected, and the cultural spice brought a sense of liveliness to many situations. Despite Israel's political climate, I was moved by the

humanity within the hospital, by the trust and lack of differentiation that are essential to healthcare. It is possible to watch how this care helps to dissolve any prejudices that patients and their families may have come in with.

I found that life in the Middle East brings with it a certain degree of unpredictability, with obstacles and challenges presenting themselves in otherwise straightforward situations. These challenges are therefore naturally also part of the hospital environment, and I noticed how staff adapted to these stresses with a graceful flexibility and a strong quick sense of humour. Initially I was bewildered to find interactions to be far less predictable than I am accustomed to, with so many different factors to account for, or forget to account for when making a plan. But I soon learnt to give up my preconceptions and to embrace this ever-surprising environment, to see how this creates a certain spontaneity and openness, with a very tangible humanity. I feel that flexibility and humour are two valuable things that I have brought back with me to Australia, both in medicine and life; my coping skills for the unexpected have improved infinitely. Also now the relatively smooth flow of life in Sydney and its hospitals is a beautiful surprise, and stress has become a concept of relativity.

In all of Jerusalem and especially in Hadassah, I found a lively and warm environment. Although many things did not run as I expected, I found many other unexpected beautiful surprises, and everywhere I turned up I was made welcome. I strongly recommend this elective to any student.

I would like to thank the Trustees of the Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund for their support and for making this opportunity possible - for which I am very grateful! I have made many valuable friends and contacts, and I am glad that I could play a part in the ongoing relationship between the two universities.