

MEDICAL STUDENT BURSARIES - Elective Report

First Name	Nicholas
Surname	Cereceda-Monteoliva
Medical School	Imperial College School of Medicine
Dates of elective	April – May 2016
Place of elective	Miami Transplant Institute Florida, USA.



Overview:

I was fortunate to spend 6 weeks on a clinical observership with the Miami Transplant Institute, part of Jackson Health Memorial Hospitals in the Miami area. This is a highly specialised facility within the hospital providing organ transplantation services to patients from across the country, and working closely with the main surgical, medical, paediatric and research centres in Jackson Health, as well as the University of Miami medical school.

In my role as an observer, I spent time with each of its principle teams, namely the Renal, Liver, GI & multivisceral and Cardiothoracic teams. I attended pre-assessment clinics for those joining a transplant waiting list and post-transplant liver and GI follow-up clinics jointly run by the surgeon and physicians. I attended the main adult and paediatric transplant teaching ward rounds and observed multiple kidney and liver transplants, as well as a cardiac transplant. I was even invited to join the on-call retrieval team on one of their external missions to a nearby city to retrieve a heart from a newly deceased donor.

Best things:

Given so much insight into the day-to-day workings of a transplant service – it is frenetic at times and unpredictable. There is so much cross-cover and MDT provision. The interface between medicine and surgery and the wealth of technology used in this area of medicine. And the surgeons are awesome at their work.

Experiencing first-hand the nature and time-pressure of the retrieval service was surreal- emergency transport with sirens slicing through highway traffic to hospitals within the state at the very least, if not helicopter or private jet to neighbouring states or even nearby Puerto Rico, to retrieve organs to bring back and operate in Miami.

I learnt about the diseases that often result in kidney transplants, their management, the surgeries of kidney and liver transplants in adults and children, the immunology of transplant medicine and learnt about medical complications that can happen later on. I saw first hand how career opportunities in medicine are incredibly varied.

Problems:

Healthcare in the USA is not state-funded. Consequently, it was shocking to see there was so much poverty and disease in the neighbourhoods surrounding the hospital, an incredibly expensive developed and well-equipped facility. The stark inequality was saddening and security in the area was poor. And Miami in general is expensive. To do anything.

Also, if you want to practise clinical skills then you have to do your USMLE exams to be allowed to get involved. But given my level of expertise as a final year medical student I was more than happy to simply observe – I experienced so much just being there and gained valuable advice from the Fellows and Attending Surgeons and Physicians (Consultants), who although busy were very welcoming.

Overall:

I would highly recommend the experience to anybody interested in transplant medicine or transplant surgery. It has without doubt inspired me to continue learning and consider transplant surgery as a career option.