

Katherine Garnett
Renal Association Medical Elective Bursary 2018 Report
Auckland City Hospital, New Zealand
25th June 2018 – 3rd August 2018

I firstly wish to extend my thanks and gratitude to The Renal Association for the bursary I was awarded which proved a huge financial help to my completion of this clinical placement.

On arrival in Auckland, I was welcomed into the renal department and given an explanation of the different teams that the department is divided into: renal transplant, referrals, renal ward and dialysis. Throughout the placement I joined ward rounds which allowed me to get to know the patients on the ward and follow their journey through their admission as well as to become a familiar face to other members of the MDT including the renal nurse specialist, social worker, pharmacist and the transplant coordinators. I also attended general renal outpatient clinics and where I took each patients blood pressure and attended follow up renal transplant clinics which afforded me the chance to talk with both donors and recipients about their experience of their transplant- following up donors appears to be a fairly unique aspect of the Auckland regional transplant group. As well as learning from the patients, the transplant clinic also prompted interesting conversations with the consultants running the clinics regarding future donor renal failure and ethics of altruistic donation and the developments in the area of ABO incompatible donation. I also spent a number of days with the renal referrals registrar, seeing inpatients on other wards who required renal review. The registrar I worked with allowed me to take histories and examine new patients, offerer differential diagnoses and suggest management plans which I found rewarding and a good learning experience. Working with this registrar was one of my favourite aspects of the placement. The highlight of my time with the renal team however, was scrubbing in to the retrieval and transplantation of a live donor kidney and recipient and the time spent with the surgical transplant fellows.

As well as being included in the clinical activities of the team, I was included in the University of Auckland 4th year medical students tutorials and teaching sessions which covered topics including acute kidney injury, chronic renal disease, glomerulonephritis, dialysis and prescribing in renal disease. I found these tutorials interesting and useful to revise nephrology topics and concepts I had not studied for a couple of years. It also proved a great opportunity to get to know medical students from the other side of the world and to compare and contrast our experiences of medical school.

There were many similarities between the delivery of healthcare in New Zealand and Northern Ireland, a fact I felt eased and enabled me to fit into the team and understand the clinical decisions being made. Overall I found the hospital to be aesthetically much more modern than hospitals in Northern Ireland but otherwise surprisingly similar and familiar. One of the most notable differences was the disparity in health literacy and subsequently outcomes between the New Zealanders of European descent and the Maori and Pacific Islander patients. This was particularly notable in outpatient clinics, with the disproportionate levels of obesity and diabetes contributing to chronic kidney diseases, and for a multitude of reasons, discordance with medical advice. Subsequently, there was also a notable disparity in Maori and Pacific Islanders being listed as eligible for transplants, further worsening outcomes.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the renal department in Auckland and felt privileged to have the opportunity to learn from the renal physicals and surgeons, particularly those working in the regional transplant group. Renal is still a career I am considering, and this placement has floated the idea of transplant surgery as a possible career path. Overall, I am so thankful I took the opportunity to undertake my elective in New Zealand; the hospital placement was rewarding,

exciting and challenging, the country was beautiful and the people were some of the kindest and most helpful I have ever met.