



THE PHARMACY DEPARTMENT REVIEW: INTERVIEWS

MARCH 2013

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

ERASMUS :CLINICAL PLACEMENT



Name: Monique Fava

Where did you carry out the placement?

Hepatitis C clinic in King's College Hospital in London, which forms part of King's College University.

How long was your stay?

3 months

Was there any reason why you chose the particular institution/country?

The great reputation that King's College has and my love for London.

How did you prepare for ERASMUS?

Language was not a problem and neither was accommodation since I stayed with my sister.

What work did you carry out during your placement?

In hospitals across the UK, a new patient monitoring system is being implemented in each clinic. I was responsible for implementing this system in the Hepatitis C clinic. I helped in monitoring of patient's symptoms, side effects and medication adherence. Since patients having Hepatitis C are usually on 3 different medications which have different dosing regimens, medication adherence is essential. I also attended ward rounds led by the senior liver pharmacists.

Everyone was very helpful and went out of their way to help me learn more about liver conditions.

Did this placement give you a different view of the pharmacy profession? Were your learning expectations met?

Yes, I noticed that pharmacists in the UK are much more respected than here. They can prescribe and lead ward rounds on a daily basis.

How was your stay

Really great, I can't complain! The only slight drawback was that everything is expensive in London.

If you were given the choice would you go again for ERASMUS and would you go to the same place? Why?

Yes, yes and yes! The work I did was so fulfilling, even considering that I don't particularly like clinical pharmacy.

This newsletter is published as part of an undergraduate project carried out by Marion Sammut under the supervision of Professor Anthony Serracino Inglott.
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Name: Elena Maria Vella

Where did you carry out the placement?

I carried out my placement at Vrije University Brussels (VUB) in the Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Drug Analysis (FASC Department). The department carries out studies involving *in vivo* neurochemistry, neuropharmacology and pharmacokinetics in animal models of a number of neurological disorders.

How long was your stay?

Three months

Was there any reason why you chose the particular institution/country?

First of all I was very interested in neuropharmacology and secondly the people who went before us were very helpful and encouraged us to go to VUB.

How did you prepare for ERASMUS?

We didn't take any language courses, however some basic knowledge of French is essential to communicate. The international relations staff members were quite helpful; we attended an introductory meeting during which they gave us important information about life in Brussels such as transport. We got to know about the apartment from the students who went before us.

What work did you carry out during your placement?

I worked in the development of mouse models of Parkinson's disease and to investigate system Xc^- as a therapeutic target in Parkinson's disease and epilepsy. I carried out motor-based tests on mice, helped during dissections, carried out staining using TH+ immunohistochemistry and Western blots on mouse and human brains. During these three months I learnt to perform a number of techniques. It was a very positive experience working with a great team.

Did this placement give you a different view of the pharmacy profession? Were your learning expectations met?

Yes because what I have seen and performed was not something that we see every day in Malta. There were some techniques such as the motor-based tests that I had never heard of before. Something that I felt very positive in Belgium was that for them you are not a student but you are a part of their team.

How was your stay?

We travelled all around Belgium and crossed borders with other countries. I was sharing the apartment with my Maltese colleague and we made new friends from Belgium, Spain and other Maltese living in Brussels. Our small apartment was 15 minutes away from the campus by bus and the landlord was a real gentleman. We had to adapt to the fact that shops closed early and on Sunday everywhere in Brussels is closed. At the end we also had to adapt going to university in the snow.

If you were given the choice would you go again for ERASMUS and would you go to the same place? Why?

Yes I would like to go again for Erasmus but I think I would prefer to go somewhere different such as Germany for a new environment.

Do you have any recommendations for the people planning to go on ERASMUS?

Wherever you go make the most of it, make new friends, travel around the country and be part of the people there. It is also positive experience doing things such as experiments and techniques that you have never done before or even heard of.



Name: Claire Bugeja

Where did you carry out the placement?

Universita degli Studi di Bari in Bari, Italy. Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacology experiments are carried out within the labs.

How long was your stay?

3 and a half months.

Was there any reason why you chose the particular institution/country?

No, that's the way things ended up. It was originally my second preference but since my first choice was not feasible, I automatically went to the second option.

How did you prepare for ERASMUS?

The Erasmus office was helpful with regards to paper work, financing issues and correspondence. I did not attend any language course even though I did not know how to speak Italian before I left. With regards to accommodation, it took us a long time until we found where to stay, however in the end I opted for the student accommodation which is in agreement with the University.

What work did you carry out during your placement?

I helped out in Chemistry experiments, such as column chromatography and extraction of certain chemicals. I managed to use the apparatus I had learned about during the lectures of Separation Techniques. I observed mice dissections in the Pharmacology lab where they tested drugs such as staurosporine and its effect on muscle atrophy. I even observed processes such as homogenization, centrifugation and spectrophotometry.

Did this placement give you a different view of the pharmacy profession? Were your learning expectations met?

Well, I experienced a completely different aspect of Pharmacy and related subjects. I managed to learn a number of processes, which were mentioned in theory, which made it more interesting.

How was your stay?

It was wonderful! I travelled a lot during a short time frame. I managed to visit most of the region I was living in, i.e. Puglia (southern Italy). I even travelled up North during the Christmas holidays, which was amazing! I got to know more about the food, the language, the different cultures, and the lifestyle. I simply loved it! Living on my own was definitely not a problem. I got to know loads of new people from many different countries, namely Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Portugal and Germany. It was great getting to know more about more countries, other than Italy.

If you were given the choice would you go again for ERASMUS and would you go to the same place? Why?

Definitely! I would not mind choosing a different country altogether. Perhaps a country which I would consider to be out of my 'comfort zone' with regards to language and lifestyle since now I know what an experience like this entails and I would not mind experiencing a whole new feeling.

Do you have any recommendations for the people planning to go on ERASMUS?

Do not put yourself in any dilemma...I suggest you should just go for it! It is an experience no one should miss out on!



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MALTA: CLINICAL PLACEMENT

Name: Marjean Xuereb



Where did you carry out the placement?

Rehabilitation Hospital Karin Grech with pharmacists Aaron Camilleri and Marise Gauci.

Was there any reason why you chose the particular hospital?

The fact that a clinical pharmacist is present during ward rounds and takes part in the decision taken to make a change in the patient's treatment.

What work did you carry out during the placement?

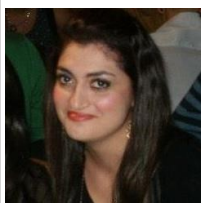
I used to attend ward rounds together with the pharmacist and the rest of the clinical team. Amongst the jobs which I performed during my placement I had access to laboratory investigations and inputted results into patient's profiles, formulated discharge medication information leaflets and compared dementia guidelines.

Did the placement meet your learning expectations? Will this experience influence your future career choice?

The placement surely met my learning expectations as I learned a lot. This experience has further enhanced my decision to pursue a career in clinical pharmacy.

If you were given the choice would you go to the same place to carry out the placement or would you choose another unit? Why?

I would choose another unit because I will have exposure in other areas where other drugs are used and the role of the clinical pharmacist may vary.



Name: Katya Sacco

Where did you carry out the placement?

Mater Dei Hospital; Dr Mario Vassallo
Gastroenterologist

Was there any reason why you chose the particular hospital/unit?

I wanted to experience the Pharmacist role in a Clinical setting.

What work did you carry out during the placement?

Writing treatment charts. Dr Mario Vassallo and his team were very helpful and always ready to provide me with information regarding procedures and treatment. However I did meet doctors who were skeptical about the usefulness of the pharmacist input.

Did the placement meet your learning expectations? Will this experience influence your future career choice?

Yes. It has further increased my wish to take up the role of clinical pharmacist in the future.

If you were given the choice would you go to the same place to carry out the placement or would you choose another unit? Why?

Yes definitely because it was a great experience.



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MALTA: INDUSTRIAL PLACEMENT

Name: Maria Schembri

Where did you carry out the placement?

I carried out my placement at Associated Drug Company (ADC) in Mriehel .



Was there any reason why you chose the particular company?

Yes, I chose the company since I was always interested in the regulatory field, on how things worked, what the Responsible Person does and the process of obtaining an MA. I wanted to see in practice what we were taught during Regulatory Affairs lectures. Also, I consider myself as a person that likes to work in an office environment and being in charge of a project so I considered this as a good opportunity to experience this kind of work.

What work did you carry out during the placement?

I was placed in an office with three Responsible Persons, whom I have found very helpful and whom I consider as friends nowadays. At first I observed and learnt about the roles of the Responsible Persons such as pharmacovigilance, handling of dangerous drugs, and what happens with a variation Later I was given specific tasks, such as organizing flow charts of certain processes. During the last part of the placement I was also given the opportunity to experience Medical Representation.

Did the placement meet your learning expectations? Will this experience influence your future career choice?

Yes, the placement met my learning expectations I learnt more about the pharmacist's role, and experienced working in an amazing team. This will influence my career choice because I am more convinced that I like working in the Regulatory field but I would consider any other options given to me.

If you were given the choice would you go to the same place to carry out the placement or would you choose another company? Why?

I would definitely go back to ADC . The management and employees were helpful and considered me as their colleague and above all taught me things that I couldn't learn from text books.



Name: Nathaniel Farrugia

Where did you carry out the placement?

I carried out my placement at the Institute of Cellular Pharmacology (ICP) where I helped in batch analysis and industrial manufacturing of nutraceuticals.

Was there any reason why you chose the particular company?

I did not have a choice as this was the only company that was listed in the pharmaceutical analysis group. However I was very pleased with the placement as I was exposed to various procedures and the staff at ICP were very willing to help.

What work did you carry out during the placement?

I was involved mainly in batch analysis of nutraceuticals performing heavy metal, density, dry matter, refractive index, zeta potential, particle size and pH analysis on samples. I was also able to use specialized equipment such as GCMS and LCMS as well as helping out with the extraction of the active ingredients from the dried plants (Opunita and Padina).

Did the placement meet your learning expectations? Will this experience influence your future career choice?

I feel I have learnt a lot from this placement. I am not sure yet I would want pharmaceutical analysis to be my main goal for my career as I am more interested in pharmacology I but nonetheless it was a good practical, hands on experience.

If you were given the choice would you go to the same place to carry out the placement or would you choose another company? Why?

It was a very positive experience and one which I highly recommend.