

Taiwan Summer Program

The first stop on our 4-week trip was Taichung, Taiwan. We all arrived at China Medical University on Sunday, 7/3, the night before our first day of class. A few of my classmates had already moved in, since they arrived a couple hours before me. We were staying at the student dorms right across the school. We were very grateful for having a cheap and convenient place to stay. Although, I have to admit we did have some difficulty adjusting to the bunk beds that lacked any type of mattress at all. By the second night, however, we found a solution and bought some cheap sleeping bags and floor mats to cushion our jet-lagged bodies at night.

During our first week there, we went to class every morning, where each day, a different doctor would teach us about Chinese Medicine. We learned about its history and philosophy, and came to appreciate how it is still used today to treat several millions of people. During the afternoon, we would have more hands-on activities, as we practiced what we learned that morning such as acupuncture or “tui na,” a form of Chinese massage therapy. In our second week, we spent the days at the hospital, shadowing doctors in different apartments, observing how Chinese Medicine can and is used to treat many different illnesses. We also spent some time learning more techniques such as fire cupping and moxibustion.

For our second stop, we traveled to Hualien, Taiwan, located on the eastern coast of Taiwan. Sandwiched between the ocean and a beautiful backdrop of mountains, Hualien was quite breathtaking. We were fortunate to have some extra time on the weekend to go whale watching and visit the Taroko National Park. During the week, however, we spent some time traveling with medical teams as they traveled to rural, underprivileged areas, to help provide medical care to these regions. We also spent some time traveling with hospice care and long term management teams.

Our last stop was Taipei, Taiwan, where we spent most of our time at National Taiwan University Hospital. Our time was split between shadowing physicians such as neonatologists, cardiologists, and pediatricians. We also visited the Bureau of National Health Insurance of Taiwan, where we were able to talk to a panel of deputy officers and probe them about the benefits and cons of having national health insurance. As this is quite a relevant issue of healthcare today, we were all very excited to have this Q/A session.

Overall, I had a fantastic time on this trip. Especially since we made sure to take advantage of any free time we had to explore the food and sights of Taiwan. I believe we all came out with a greater appreciation for the culture and customs of Taiwan.

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