

We spent the first 2 weeks of our 4-week program at College of Chinese Medicine, China Medical University, Taichung, Taiwan. We were fortunate that the school invited several faculty/residents to give us lectures in the first 4 days, both morning and afternoon. Lecture topics included an introduction to Chinese medicine, theory/application of acupuncture/moxibustion, tuina (massage), traumatology, herbal medicine, meridian theory, and many others. We were also given the opportunity to practice acupuncture on selected acupoints on each other, as well as cupping, scraping, and massaging. These lectures were beneficial for us to understand more when we shadowed in the hospital the following week. We directly observed how Chinese medical doctors practice acupuncture in a hospital outpatient setting. Many patients came for their arthritis, back pain, facial palsy, and even cerebral palsy. We also saw how Chinese traumatology could fix joint dislocation/separation as well as how massage can relieve some pain. The school also organized a trip for us to a nearby Chinese herbal medicine pharmaceutical company. The company is GMP-certified and the production line is on par with western pharmaceutical industry. Although experts say the most efficacious formulation of the herbal medicine is to cook as was traditionally done, however, the modern preparation (using extracts made into powder or pills) is more convenient and maybe more hygienic.

The third week we flew to western Taiwan, Hualien, where Tzu Chi University was our host. The university was established by the Tzu Chi Foundation, a buddhist organization focused in charity, education, recycle, and medical care. We went to some remote health offices to observe how medical care is delivered to disadvantaged aboriginal people. We also followed nurses to visit patients at home for long-term care or hospice care. At the hospital, we learned how they treat the donated cadavers with the utmost respect, which is very different from our experience at RWJMS. Medical students met the donor's family in several occasions, every dissected parts, including skin/fat are saved, and every organ is put back and the body is sewed upon completion of the anatomy course. Faculty and students join the final funeral with the family. Tzu Chi also has the unique simulated surgery training center where the cadavers are cryopreserved, that when thawed, the appearance and texture is very close to fresh human body. We also observed inpatient hospice care and noticed that there were many buccal and nasopharyngeal cancer due to high prevalence of betel nut chewing in Taiwan.

We took a train back to Taipei for the final week (train tickets need to be reserved in advance especially if travel on weekends). We shadowed at various departments at the National Taiwan University Hospital and its Children's Hospital, including ER, pediatric hem/onc, NICU, and colonoscopy/endoscopy. We also went to the Minimally Invasive Surgery Training Center to directly experience how NTU medical students learn minimally invasive procedures such as laparoscopy or bronchoscopy. During this last week, we also visited the National Health Insurance Bureau to learn how much success Taiwan has had with their national health insurance. We also had a meeting with representatives from the Taiwan Medical Association to hear about physician's perspectives on the insurance system. The current health insurance system is very convenient for the patients as they are free to select any specialty/subspecialty physicians of their choice without referrals needed. The premium is also relatively small compared to the US. Satisfaction rate from patients has been very high and coverage is over 98% of the entire country. However, the system operates on a global budget and therefore many times health professionals are not compensated as well as the American counterparts. Any policy change to control

the budget by increasing premium and decreasing benefits to prevent wasting medical resources is difficult as politicians are mostly worried about votes and health professionals only represents a very small proportion of the constituents.

In conclusion, we had a very fruitful summer, it was low-stressed and we learned a lot about Chinese medicine as well as how western medicine is practiced in Taiwan. In the meantime, we also had time in the evenings and weekends to travel and explore this beautiful county.

























