

CoScan Report – Imogen Allen

In the depths of the English winter 2018, whilst going to placement in the dark and coming home in the dark, there was nothing less appealing to me than emailing over 30 hospitals (yes - I counted) around the world to secure a place for my Medical School Elective. All I knew was that I wanted to go to a country where good English was spoken, there was first rate healthcare (especially as regards Trauma and Emergency) and a pride in the way of life. With these criteria, it soon occurred to me that a Scandinavian country provided me with the solution.

After 2 weeks and no replies, I was delighted to receive a response from the Professor of Emergency Medicine at Odense University Hospital Denmark. With two Helicopter Pads, the most modern emergency department in the whole of Denmark and the kindest email written in perfect English I did not wait 1 second before replying to accept the offer of four weeks' placement!

Fast forward 7 months, finishing my medical school final exams, I found myself sitting on the plane itching to get going!

I arrived at my 'Air BnB' on what can only be described as a typical Danish street. I hired a bike (the true Danish way to get around) and cycled to the hospital on my first day, not knowing what to expect. When I arrived, I was welcomed with open arms by the whole team of Consultants and Junior Doctors and was taken straight to get the uniform of a blue top and white coat. I was immediately made to feel part of the emergency medicine family, as all staff wore the same uniform - whether you were a secretary or a consultant. This was only the start of many stark differences between the NHS and the Danish healthcare system which I experienced over the next 4 weeks of my stay.



The Professor supervising my experience notified me of a student-run exchange group who organise trips for the all the students across the world who come to Denmark for their Elective and I was soon experiencing the best of both worlds – sightseeing in one of the cleanest and most beautiful countries I have ever visited with some great people and also getting stuck into some of the most intense medical trauma’s I have ever seen so far in medicine.

To meet all of the students, we all attended a Danish student’s house and brought a dish from our country of domicile. There was not one person from the same country, so the array of different foods was vast. I combined exploring on my own and exploring with the group evenly so that I could experience as much as I possibly could whilst in Denmark.

Odense is the home of the famous children’s story writer Hans Christian Anderson, and I found myself wondering around the picturesque streets and parks of Odense that appeared scrupulously clean.



One of the highlights of my trip was visiting Egeskov Castle; a fully functioning family home of part of the royal family with only a few rooms open to the public. The castle looked like it was floating on water!



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I could not fairly write this report without talking more about the emergency trauma calls I was involved in. Throughout the 4 weeks of my time in the department I was rotating around the different levels of care that they provide, no other students were allowed to work in the Emergency Department so I had a completely unique experience. They had a 'Minor Injuries' department where people would come in from their GP's to be assessed first by the nurses and then a Doctor. Eighty percent of these patients are sent home with symptoms proving to be nothing too serious.

The places which provided the most adrenalin fuelled work were the 4 trauma rooms dedicated to receive the most poorly patients. They frequently arrived via the helicopter or ambulance containing the 'Pre-Hospital Emergency Doctor'.

Odense Hospital covered a huge area in Southern and Central Denmark and although sometimes the outcomes of emergency arrivals were poor, which I found to be emotionally taxing, I felt my learning experience was deep, valuable and memorable.

I helped treat drug overdoses, major brain haemorrhages, strokes, severe infections and people who had collapsed at home with an unknown cause.



I could not believe my luck when I was granted the opportunity to shadow the 'Pre-Hospital Emergency Doctor' who was the doctor involved with all the major incidents out of hospital.

Pre-Hospital Doctor's are only called to the most serious of incidents whilst paramedics go out to the majority of calls, so when a call came in for a 45 year old patient who had gone into a cardiac arrest (where the heart stops beating), the alarm was raised and we jumped into the doctor's car and raced to the scene. I was under the impression that I would be observing, but as we arrived to the scene, the patient was requiring 3 male paramedics to rotate in doing CPR, not only that but 4 members of the patient's family were watching. The doctor went straight to the patient and managed to insert a tube into the lungs to enable the patient to breath. I was then called upon to take over the breathing bag whilst she administered drugs through the shin bone (yes I said that correctly, the shin bone).....

15 minutes of tireless resuscitation went by and the patient's heart started beating again... we had brought him back to life. As a team.

My time in Denmark was priceless, I had visited all the best places to go and even managed to squeeze in a family weekend to Copenhagen. I met some wonderful friends from all over the world, spoke to many patients in English, observed outstanding healthcare which I feel the NHS should learn from and managed to assist in saving multiple lives including bringing someone back to life.

In Denmark there is a word 'Hygge', it is a word to describe a way of life and a feeling of cosiness and contentment. I felt that in Denmark meeting new friends, experiencing new health care practices and, at the end of the day, helping to save lives is the perfect example of Hygge.

