

I am Donna Lin, a seventh year medical student from National Yang Ming University (NYMU), Taiwan. Thanks to our beloved principal, Professor Kung-Yee Liang, former Director of Graduate Programs in Department of Biostatistics, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, NYMU established an affiliation with the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (JHUSOM) two years ago, allowing selected students to rotate in two clinical electives in the Johns Hopkins Hospital. In the academic year of 2013-2014, spaces for four candidates were offered by the JHUSOM. It was a great privilege for me to be elected as one of the four lucky students.

I rotated in Cardiology and Endocrinology between 2/2014-4/2014 over the course of nine weeks. Both electives involved in consultation services. Dr. Jones, Director of Inpatient Cardiology, JHUSOM, encouraged exchange medical students to pursue whatever interested us and was educative. I was free to visit the cath lab, attend fellows' conferences or join inpatient team rounds at my will. The number of consults I am assigned each day varies, but throughout the day there was always some activity in the Cardiology department that was intriguing for me.

My Endocrine experience was just as fulfilling. Medical students would participate in clinic in the morning with attendings and see consults in the afternoon. The clinic fellow would arrange for us to work with a different attending each day, thus allowing us to touch on every subspecialty in endocrinology. Clinic was always busy but exciting. Consults were seen after clinic was over. Every case I was assigned proved to be educative, intriguing, complex and challenging to just the right degree for second-last-year med student.

The greatest difference between medical education in Taiwan and that in the U.S. is our seven-year program that includes college and internship. In NYMU, we complete our clerkship rotations during our fifth year and commence internship in our sixth. I have had 1.5 years of clinical experience before I started my rotations in the JHH. This enabled me to experience the JHH from a perspective that was impossible for me in my fourth year. I learned far more than medical knowledge alone from this nine-week-long visit.

Of course, being the no. 1 hospital in the U.S., the professionalism of each specialty was breathtaking. Patients flocking from all over the country presented with amazing complexity of disease. Medicine, surgical techniques, modalities and equipment here were the pioneers of mankind. And the brains! The JHH probably houses the highest

density of brains among hospitals in the world. The rationale behind every treatment and diagnostic testing was discussed and established from the very basics of science and supported with the most up-to-date evidence.

But the fact remains that whatever is the most “correct” in medicine now is likely to be proved wrong in a couple of decades. Science – which of course, includes medicine – is a constant pursuit for truth. What hit me the hardest in the JHH was the enthusiasm for innovation and research, the forever asking for “why”. What we learned the med school were conclusions from centuries of medical history, but does not foresee the history yet to be written. Patient care is not easy, and is certainly one of the most important areas of medicine, but simply following guidelines and evidence without challenging or demanding for better would not bring us anywhere further than where we are now.

Learning to ask “why” was the greatest lesson I learned in the JHH. Medicine should be based on evidence, and evidence is found only if you sought for it. Research discoveries and treatment advancements happen only as we seek for answers, striving to do better. And that is how history is written.

A most heartfelt thank you again to the JHUSOM, the JHH Departments of Cardiology and Endocrinology, and NYMU for this wonderful opportunity. I have confidence that my experience in the JHH would have a positive impact on my medical career for many, many years to come.