

Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, India – Department of Immunology

3 to 27 May 2011

Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) is a large campus-based research hospital based about 13km from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Northern India. The hospital has many different specialities. Each speciality has both a clinical department and academic/research department. My placement was in the department of immunology. I saw a variety of conditions although the majority of the patients had rheumatological disease.

I attended morning academic meetings which consisted of journal clubs, case discussions, video-conference meetings and seminars. These morning meetings were a fantastic opportunity for further learning, both of immunology and general research methods.

My time was split between spending time on the ward and spending time in the Out Patient Department (OPD). The ward has four separate bays, with one bay for patients requiring extra care. It was interesting to spend time on the ward to see how inpatients were assessed, monitored and treated. I was fortunate to follow some patients from the OPD to the ward as they were admitted. The OPD provided an excellent opportunity to see numerous patients with multiple conditions presenting at various stages of their disease. The OPD has clinics specifically for patients with: myositis, scleroderma, rheumatoid arthritis, SLE, fibromyalgia and a dedicated paediatric session.

I examined patients, learnt about, and completed the musculoskeletal examination proforma relevant to their disease (including the DAS score for rheumatoid arthritis). I also had the opportunity to perform intra-articular joint injections.

The OPD allowed me to experience clinical research 'in-practice', with patients regularly being recruited into on-going studies. With such large numbers of patients in clinic, some presenting with what would be considered 'rarer' conditions in the West; it was exciting to see how quickly a rather large number of subjects could be recruited for a study.

I have seen numerous cases and many conditions that I have not previously had the chance to see. These included:

- A 5 year old boy with agammaglobulinaemia who came into OPD for treatment.
- A 24 year old man with SLE on the ward. This was interesting because it is rare to see males with SLE; the prognosis is worse than in females and is often associated with more severe systemic involvement.
- A 6 year old girl with systemic onset juvenile arthritis and amyloidosis, started on monoclonal antibody.
- A 20 year old lady with dermatomyositis and necrotising ulcers.
- A 19 year old man with systemic sclerosis with diffuse scleroderma.
- A 10 month old boy with suspected Lesch Nyhan syndrome.

The principles of medicine in India are essentially the same as in the UK. However I noticed differences in patient care on the wards. In India, patients' relatives stay at the hospital to care for their patients.

It was inspiring to see how the doctors at SGPGIMS used limited investigations to form a diagnosis in an attempt to reduce the cost to the patient.

I was struck by how far some of the patients travel to come to the hospital but appreciate that SGPGIMS is a tertiary referral centre and that patients come here to receive excellent care.

I really enjoyed my placement at SGPGIMS. I found the hospital environment stimulating and saw conditions I had not seen (or heard of, in some cases) before. The campus is well equipped, with a sports centre, bank, shops, laundry and lots of interesting wildlife. All the hospital staff were very welcoming and the doctors in the department were friendly and enthusiastic to teach me.

General Information about SGPGIMS, Lucknow, India

The hospital is set on a large campus (about 5 miles in diameter) about 10 miles outside of the town of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Northern India.

The accommodation is provided in the guesthouse (this is also used by any visiting doctors and guests attending conferences). It is just a 5 minute walk from the hospital and situated in the centre of the campus. The rooms are well equipped, all with bathrooms. They have air conditioning, television and a telephone. You can choose to have meals in the guesthouse or eat in the hospital. The meal prices are very reasonable (50 rupees for dinner in the guesthouse).

The campus has a couple of small shops which stock dry goods such as bread, snacks and drinks and a couple of shops where you can buy fruit and toiletries. The campus also has a State of India bank, where you can change foreign currency and travellers cheques. There are two cash machines on the campus, one in outpatients and one by the gate.

Additionally the campus has a sports centre (a gym, pool and courts), a post office, a school and a railway ticket booking station. I found it nice to walk around the campus in the evenings; there is a lot of wildlife, particularly monkeys, near the hospital building itself.

The campus is rather isolated but you can arrange to hire a car to go into Lucknow. You need to ask Dr Misra or Dr Amita in the department about this.

There are four consultants in the department. The head of department is Prof R Misra. There are about 6–8 residents (SHOs/registrars) and 6–8 research students who are non-clinical.