

Jerusalem, Israel

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2003

Things have been going very well, indeed. I had a fascinating dermatology rotation; while I saw plenty of patients with disease which I probably would have seen in the US (psoriasis and pemphigus); I also had the opportunity to see patients with problems which, while not common here, are far less rare than they are in the US (cutaneous leishmaniasis and leprosy. I discovered there is a hospital in Jerusalem from the 19th century which is dedicated solely to the treatment of Hansen's Disease; while the disease is far less common now, the wave of immigration from Ethiopia and influx of foreign workers from the far east means that the hospital still has outpatients coming to clinics although it no longer has residents). Overall it was a fascinating month. I am now in the second week of my endocrinology rotation. Patients primarily have diabetes or thyroid problems (though I saw some with pan-hypopituitarism, Diabetes Insipidus and Prolactinomas). In Pediatric endo I saw the usual growth hormone deficiency and pediatric diabetes. I also tagged along to a couple of rounds in the Peds department. It was interesting considering there are a number of small, relatively closed communities (Israeli/Palestinian Arabs, Haredi, Ultra Orthodox Jews) that intermarry and have a lot of children. Coupled with inadequate prenatal care, this leads to a significant number of genetic defects such as epidermolysis bullosa, trisomy 18, congenital heart defects, and Crohn's disease.

Cultural Differences: There is significantly less pressure to get patients in and out of hospitals; some of the patients on the dermatology ward stayed hospitalized for periods of time up to a month to receive therapies which I would guess are done on an outpatient basis in the US, such as coal tar and UVB therapy for psoriasis. There are almost no patients who are un-insured. Most patients are members of a Kupat Cholim which is similar to a government subsidized HMO and most doctors work for the government in one capacity or another. There is no college – one goes to medical school straight out of the army without first obtaining a BA. Med school is 6 years – the first 3.5 are pre-clinical studies and the last 2.5 are clinical. Following med school comes final exams for a period of months, followed by a transitional internship year and then residency. Residency programs are also longer, usually by a year or two, than US programs. In the end, Israel is still flooded with more MDs per capita than anywhere else in the world. Most residents are issued cell phones instead of beepers, med students and residents wear jeans in the wards, and bedside manner is frightful.