

Khon Kaen University
Khon Kaen, Thailand

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I had the great pleasure and fortune (with the kind assistance of CGHD at CWRU) of studying at the faculty of medicine in Khon Kaen, Thailand in November 1996. Overall I had an excellent experience in terms of quality, life, cultural and medical learning. However, this experience is certainly not for everyone and I will outline below the particular plusses and minuses of the program to help guide future students interested in Khon Kaen.

The greatest strength of the faculty is their kind and competent treatment of patients, staff, and especially guests like me. Despite a troubling language barrier at times, the attending and residents made every effort to involve me in the management and educational opportunities surrounding their patient cases. I was able to participate as much as I cared to, including procedures such as LP and paracentesis!

Another advantage of Khon Kaen is the great opportunity to learn clinical skills. Given the limited resources, the Thai doctors are generally more adept than their American counterparts in terms of physical exam (and conversely are generally better in the use of high technology). My physical exam certainly improved as a result of my time at Khon Kaen.

There is also an excellent opportunity for cultural learning, as the Thai people are extremely gracious and eager to share their culture and hear about yours. I lived with a lovely family which greatly enhanced my experience.

The drawbacks include the language barrier. Although most residents speak some English, most conferences and, of course, patient interactions are conducted in Thai. On numerous occasions I regretted not knowing the native tongue.

Another drawback is the location of the faculty in the outskirts of town. I was lucky in that my host family lived in the city and I was exposed to the more vibrant sections of Khon Kaen. However, for a student living on campus I can imagine things could become quite boring. One must also realize that Khon Kaen is generally an industrial city and its great attraction is its wonderful inhabitants, not its physical setting.

Thus, in conclusion, I can report without hesitation that I had a wonderful learning experience at Khon Kaen. I am sure I will never be so graciously welcomed anywhere else in the world. If you're prepared for a challenging developing world learning experience, Khon Kaen may be the place!