國際交流

Subject **My UAB Clerkship Experience**

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I have aspired to attend the visiting clerkship program at the University of Alabama in Birmingham since my first year as a medical student here at Chung Shan Medical University. I did not know much about the school, or the city in which I will be residing in, but it was my curiosity about the American medical system that propelled me to travel by myself all the way to Birmingham, Alabama this year as I near the end of my sixth year in my medical studies.

I spent two months at UAB and the two rotations that I signed up for are infectious diseases and rheumatology. In both departments, I spent time in their consultation services on wards at the hospital and in their subspecialty clinics as well.

My first month was spent in infectious diseases where I spent my first two weeks on consultation wards for general infectious disease cases and the last two weeks at their HIV service wards and clinic. I was able to witness various different types of infections, from herpes encephalitis to *P.jiroveci* infections in AIDS patients. The teams covered consults in many hospitals on campus such as the Veteran's Hospital, Cooper Green Hospital, and UAB Hospital. I would go see consults with a fellow or resident in the morning and then we would round in the afternoons with the attending doctor. Sometimes if there is a new consult that morning, I would be allowed to take the history and do a physical examination and final evaluation and present the patient to the attending during rounds. This is pretty much similar to what I did as a clerk in CSMU, however, it was the atmosphere during rounds at UAB that felt so casual and relaxed in comparison to the serious and stressful tone of air that is commonly felt during rounds in Taiwan medical hospitals. Even with many consults to see that afternoon, the doctors were never in a rush and took time to finish each consult as carefully as they can, being very specific with each order they make and carry out. I was also always very nervous when presenting a patient to the attending during rounds but the fellows and residents would always encourage me and tell me "That was a very good presentation, Angela!" even when I seriously thought I did just a mediocre job.

The internal medicine residents have their own conferences everyday during lunch where a presenter would present a topic of their own choice. These conferences were often very lively and interesting because the presenter would almost always include amusing facts and pictures in their presentation slides so rarely did I see anyone falling asleep in the audience. This I thought was something I think we in Taiwan can learn and benefit from as speakers during presentations so that we can always keep the attention of our audience.

My last two weeks in infectious diseases was spent on the HIV consult team. That team covered any consult patients with HIV in all hospitals on campus and also followed up with the patients for routine HIV check-ups at the 1917 Clinic. This clinic is especially for HIV infected patients who want to seek optimal healthcare with low costs. There, I saw various different HIV patients with the fellow and attending. The attending also taught me that when confronting a patient who is suspected to have HIV infection, the examiner must never be too timid to ask personal questions about the patient's sexual behavior and methods because we must never miss any valuable information that may help us determine the possible route of transmission of the acquired HIV infection.

My second month at UAB in the rheumatology department was quite different from my first month. In comparison to infectious diseases, there are very few rheumatology inpatients at the hospital. However, these patients who are admitted usually have very serious illnesses. These cases were