

# Final Report - Hippokrates Exchange Programme

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## Dates of Exchange:

From: 11th July - 21st July 2011

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In the recent past, for various reasons, in our Country the figure of the General Practitioner has been put unfortunately in the background. Many people still do not understand that this job allows us to have directly contact with the problems of the *person* (other than the patient) who is in front of us, and we have to affirm it strongly. A good doctor, who has this possibility, starting with a holistic vision, can help first the person and after the patient to deal with a certain situation and steers her towards a correct diagnosis and care way.

This does not mean that there is a doctor more competent than another, but to integrate the expertises of GPs and Consultants and to forget redundant conflicts (seen as ancient from us young doctors) is necessary. Because this is for patient benefit and his health is in the first place. Being an Italian General Practice Registrar and thinking to explore the European reality is absolutely useful, when, through the Hippokrates Programme, I had the chance to spend a period of 2 weeks in an English practice, I took it; because I believe there is always something to learn, possibly capturing examples to improve our own reality.

And so, on last July, full of enthusiasm, I gone out to Newcastle Upon Tyne, North Eastern England. There Nick, a very nice GP Registrar, was waiting for me and introduced me to Dr Andrew Clarke, his GP Trainer for six months and who has been my Tutor for two weeks.

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Dr Clarke works in a practice in Newton Aycliffe, a small town situated about 30 miles from Newcastle, together with four Partner GPs, one Salaried GP and the GP Registrar, who visits the patients in his own office and consults the Trainer when necessary. The health staff is also composed of three Nurse Practitioners (professional figures who attended for two years a training with the GP and visit the patients with minor problems and can prescribe certain drugs) and six Nurses. Furthermore, there is an administrative staff, welcoming and very friendly, managing many things and the doctors' bureaucratic work.

On particular days of the week, the practice receives nursing staff and midwives sent by Local Health District (Durham County Health Service) for vaccination of the children and follow-up of the pregnancies, respectively. The patients are about 11,000 (a big part of the 29,000 inhabitants of the town).

In particular, a typical day at work (from 8.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.) is composed of practice visits (every ten minutes) by appointment and home visits, from midday to 1.30 p.m. In addition, there are telephone consultations for patients who asked it. In case of the impossibility to fix an appointment, anyway certain times for the urgencies are guaranteed. Every GP is *on call* one afternoon a week for the home visits of all the colleagues. ECGs are performed and blood samples are collected and then sent to laboratories for analysis.

Through dedicated software, the management of the case history, drugs prescribing, instrumental tests and specialist visits requiring, communication with colleagues GPs, Nurses and Administration are possible. During the visit, the patient takes a seat near the doctor and, after the diagnosis, is involved in the decisions.

The pace of work is certainly strong, but all appeared very efficient and with a good service to the citizens.

About the GP Training Programme, each area of England has own specific path (in that case,

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Northumbria Vocational Training Scheme - NHS North-East Education), anyway meeting national programme criteria. Once passed the admission exam, the training is for three years, during which the hospital departments and general practices sign a contract with the GP Registrars. There are very demanding theoretic and practical tests to pass, including the final one. Thus obtained the qualification of GP, you can send your own cover letter and curriculum vitae to the various general practices and begin to work first as Salaried GP and then maybe as Partner GP.

This, very briefly, my experience; there would be much more to tell about what I saw and lived during those two weeks (a brief time, apparently, but pleasantly intense), both professionally and humanly, thanks to people as Nicolae and Rod, Andrew and his family, and all the colleagues and staff of the practice, who received and hosted me as an old friend; I really miss them.

I strongly believe that, as Registrars, a period abroad would be guaranteed. I heartily recommend this kind of “adventure” to everyone, because it will definitely benefit to own personal growth and to the future as GP.