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ISU 2019, Clinical Perspective in Physiotherapy

Personal and professional development (“group reflection”)

This placement was certainly rewarding, and we felt that there were several key learning experiences throughout this placement that lead to true personal and professional development for both of us.

This placement allowed us to experience and understand many different cultures and interact with people with diverse backgrounds. We met two different groups from America, locals from Germany, and others from within Europe which provided us an invaluable opportunity to talk about world-wide problems that are relevant today. This sparked in-depth and meaningful discussions which gave us enriching insight to how people around the world are handling important issues. For example, within the American students alone we learnt so much about differing opinions regarding healthcare systems. In this case, some agreed with the social welfare system (much like the German system) but many felt that healthcare should be individual and not social responsibility as healthcare costs may be too much of an economic burden.

Along with this we also developed many professional relationships which may serve to be useful in the future. For example, we met many German physiotherapists and students who were interested in research and were currently engaged in research projects. This may be valuable in the future should we seek an opportunity to conduct Physiotherapy studies together. We also visited a large insurance company in the German healthcare, which allowed us to explore how different the German healthcare system is as compared to Australia's. German healthcare system is based off 4 key principles: all-for-one, rich for the poor, young for the old, healthy for the sick, which is an asset to have as this means that everyone has equal access and rights to healthcare. While Australian healthcare system is equally brilliant in ensuring that the masses have right to free healthcare, it made us ponder if adopting the German healthcare system may improve or enhance care delivery to the lower rungs of society within the Australian health system. We were also given the opportunity to network with companies such as Cyberdyne corporation which provides access to robotic-assisted gait training. This may be useful for us to explore options to bring similar technology to Australian hospitals or private practice when we are employed in the field upon graduation.

We were also extremely impressed with the attitudes many Germans have regarding their tragic past (Nazi Germany). Many of the Germans not only publicly acknowledge this ill-fated incident but many consider important to keep being aware about these occurrences as they felt like it was the only way to prevent future incidences of such monstrosities. This is especially apt within the social context today, with events of terrorism, racism and white supremacy spiking especially in America, and this raises the question if the world has forgotten history and if we are doomed to repeat these mistakes again.

All in all, ISU2019 was a culturally enriching experiences that allowed us not only to understand how the Germans behave, but also allowed us to peek into the world of America and the European Union and provide us with greater insights and perspectives that contributes to our world views. This is important as our world is increasing globalised, so understanding different cultures and ethnicities will allow us to deliver more culturally-sensitive practices when we work as clinicians upon graduation.