

Elective Placement – Naini Leprosy Hospital, India



Outside the hospital

We arrived in Allahabad at 3am, before making the half hour journey out of the city to TLM hospital in Naini. It was as though we were driving through the streets in the middle of the day, except that someone had turned out all the lights! Despite being 'bedtime', the streets were full of life with people everywhere! I feel this initial sight was a good representation of India; it is a country overflowing with life and culture, full of hustle and bustle!

Our time in hospital began at 8am the next morning, so, very sleepy eyed, our elective adventure began. Each day was started at 8am with a short chapel service with the hospital staff. It was a tight routine that I would never have considered doing at home, but, it was a refreshing way to begin each day and was an excellent opportunity to focus your mind and give the day ahead into God's hands.



Visiting a leprosy colony

Each day the 4 of us split ourselves up amongst the various departments. There were opportunities to experience surgery, dermatology, general practice, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, counselling and gynaecology. With hundreds of patients queuing at the gates each morning and only 10 doctors, the hospital was very busy, but despite time-restraints, the doctors were very accommodating and keen to offer teaching and hands-on experience. The long distances patients travelled was a fine reflection of the esteemed

reputation that TLM has established for itself.

Whilst at medical school, a lot of emphasis is put on the concept of 'holistic care' (i.e. treating not only the physical, but also the social and psychological health of patients). The care that I observed in TLM for its Leprosy patients was above and beyond anything I'd ever witnessed in the UK. Dr Das, the hospital's surgeon, was highly skilled in correcting the deformities associated with Leprosy. Alongside his excellent team of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists he worked hard to produce the best possible results for each



Electives with Hospital doctors

of his patients. The huge social stigma attached to Leprosy often leaves patients with complex psychological and social needs. Dr Neelmani, the hospital's counsellor, was an inspiration. He had a genuine interest in and care for his patients, and single-handedly took on the mammoth task of supporting all the patients through their Leprosy diagnosis and management; it was obvious that they had a lot of respect for him. TLM also offered programmes to help reintroduce patients to society; a range of support is available, including education for children who are no longer welcome in school and small loans to help re-start businesses.

By showing love to a people who are still wrongly looked down-upon in society, TLM is a light in India. Their high-quality of medical care, practical support and genuine concern for their patients was a real reflection of God's love in a spiritually dark country.



Our time in India was an amazing experience. India's healthcare system is very different from the NHS and I found aspects of it challenging. For example, due to a limited budget, the hospital could not afford to be wasteful and had to function on basic resources. The levels of over-crowding and poverty were also difficult to take in

and process, but it was a privilege to see how Christian organisations like TLM are passionately playing a role in bringing about change.

I would like to thank TLM for hosting us this summer. We had a wonderful time and were sad to leave. My only complaint was the 47 degree humidity! Note to self – avoid monsoon season next time!

