



Kaitlin Mayne, University of Dundee Elective - Intensive Care - Wellington, New Zealand



Wellington ICU

The Intensive Care Unit in Wellington is one of the leading units of its kind in New Zealand. They treat around 1800 patients each year from within a 300km radius (around 1 million people). The current unit was opened in 2009 and accommodates 18 patients. The department provides tertiary intensive care across all medical and surgical specialties (except burns and spinal injuries). They also treat the majority of children requiring intensive care (80-100 per year), transferring only special cases to the specialist paediatric unit in Auckland. A flight retrieval service also operates from the ICU, transferring more than 800 patients a year between different hospitals in New Zealand. Wellington Regional Hospital is a teaching hospital and the unit also has a strong research interest.

What did I do?

I spent the majority of my time within the Intensive Care Unit, attending ward rounds and observing and participating in clinical work throughout the day. The team were keen to get me involved and I had several opportunities to perform advanced procedures such as arterial lines, central lines, intubation and lumbar puncture, under supervision. I also joined the Medical Emergency Team (MET) on calls around the hospital reviewing acutely unwell patients. These were very valuable to participate in and observe the management of an acute situation as I will soon be faced with similar situations as a junior doctor. Many of the Intensivists also work in Anaesthetics and so I also spent some of my time in theatre which gave me an even broader experience. Perhaps the highlight for me was accompanying the flight retrieval team on patient retrievals across a large part of the country. I had never experienced that sort of medicine before so it was totally new and exciting! The Wellington Team has two fixed wing aircrafts and a helicopter which retrieve patients on a daily basis. Most retrievals are done by plane and the team are very keen to take elective students along when possible. On top of clinical activities, I attended several teaching sessions which really improved my knowledge and understanding of key areas within Intensive Care medicine. The department has an x-ray meeting every morning in which they review all recent imaging for patients in the unit, with a radiologist, which really improved my skills in interpreting x-rays and CT scans.

I hadn't previously had any experience of Intensive Care medicine and so all of these opportunities were extremely valuable. I now feel much more confident dealing with common critical care issues and the management of acutely unwell patients, which will be very helpful as I start work as a junior doctor. The field of Anaesthetics and Intensive Care medicine is a very attractive career option and my elective allowed me to gain a much more in-depth understanding of the specialty. I thank the Association for providing financial support to help facilitate my elective and enable me to gain this unique experience which I wouldn't have had as part of my core undergraduate training in the UK.