



Ever since I chose medicine as my career path, I have developed an overwhelming desire to explore and experience medicine in a vast array of varied environments. Especially since I was born and bred in Darwin, being in such a unique setting has only awakened my passion to improve health holistically in rural/remote settings. Hence, I have continually sought challenging rural and remote opportunities to gain as much experience as possible over a diverse range of healthcare settings as I strongly believe that rural/remote placements are imperative to exposing students to unique experiences that I may not experience anywhere else in the world. This led to my immense excitement over being lucky enough to be one of the only four Northern Territory Medical Program (NTMP) students chosen for the Medical Education in Central Australia (MECA) program. This program enabled me to spend my entire first year of clinical placement rotating through various disciplines at the Alice Springs Hospital (ASH), the Tennant Creek Hospital (TCH) and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC). These disciplines included General Medicine, General Surgery, Paediatrics, Psychiatry, Emergency Medicine, Women's Health and General Practice.

The ASH is a regional hospital with 160 beds that service 1,000,000 km² in Central Australia. Even more rural than Alice Springs is the TCH, which serves the Barkly region with a mere 20 beds, and is limited to only an Emergency Department, ward, renal dialysis unit, and GP clinics. Due to their locations, these hospital and clinical environments were set up as the perfect positions to help me better understand and help with the challenges of being in a rural/remote setting. Such challenges included the restriction of resources, lack of access (especially in extreme weather conditions), navigating diverse cultural backgrounds, and the large burden of chronic diseases in Central Australia (including diabetes, rheumatic heart disease and kidney disease). Specifically, I remember a period of time where extreme flooding cut off the fresh food supplies in Alice Springs. This was something I

had never experienced properly before, but it clearly demonstrated to me how important simple resources can be to one's overall health.

Other invaluable experiences also included gaining first-hand experience at assessing patients presenting to the hospital via history taking and physical examination, clinical problem solving, performing medical procedures (like venepunctures, cannulations, Basic and Advanced Life Support) and learning patient management/treatment approaches.

I also found it beneficial to help support outreach clinics in various remote Indigenous communities (like Ali Curung, Murray Downs, Wallace Rockhole, and Yuelamu). These outreach experiences enabled me to explore for myself where patients lived and helped me to further practice my skill set in different disciplines. I even had the opportunity to support primary health programs by promoting health at remote schools and volunteering in local vaccination programs.



Fortunately, these unique rural/remote placements allowed me to work together with patients to address health issues affecting all aspects of their wellbeing. Ultimately, this has helped me learn from patients' experiences and continually help them through their lives and over a multitude of various problems.

In addition, I was able to experience the health system as a patient myself when I became a first-time victim and survivor of a car crash mid-year while travelling from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs due to a careless caravan driver crashing into my car, which I fortunately survived but not my car. Admittedly, I am still recovering after this event, but it has provided me with the added first-hand experience of the healthcare challenges patients face, especially in a rural and remote setting. This has helped me empathise with how patients experience healthcare and gain a better understanding of how we could improve healthcare in the future.

For the future, I plan to utilise all I have learnt, both positive and negative, from these unique rural/remote health experiences and apply them to my future clinical placement to continually strive to benefit the health of others. Not only has my passion for rural/remote health been strengthened, all of these priceless diverse experiences have deeply enriched my knowledge and skill set. My unique rural/remote experiences have humbled me, which I believe will help me immensely in my life-long journey to become the best doctor I can be for my patients (i.e. a doctor that embodies/demonstrates the core values of my university which are scholarship, knowledge, skills, communication, society, leadership and professionalism) - all of which are in line with my life objective to continually aspire to do my utmost best to excel in all that I do.

I also extend my thanks to the Australian Medical Association NT for supporting me whilst I undertook my rural and remote placement. I truly appreciate this opportunity and encourage others to apply in 2023.