

ESIM report – Dr Jessica Smith, ACCS-IM, North East Deanery

It was a privilege to be selected to attend the European School of Internal Medicine (ESIM) summer school in Alexandroupoli. The summer school was attended by 52 internal medicine trainees from 17 countries in Europe. The programme consisted of lectures, interactive discussions, case presentations, and small group tutorials. Topics included commonly encountered medical conditions such as diabetes, stroke, and liver disease, as well as rarer conditions such as sweet syndrome, monkeypox, and cold agglutinin disease. The teaching sessions were a great way to consolidate medical knowledge and apply theory to real life cases. It was interesting to learn about conditions seen commonly in other countries that are rare in the UK. All participants had to present an interesting case in pairs, which was a good opportunity to practice oral presentation skills.

In the evenings there were a range of social activities, including a visit to a local olive grove for olive oil tasting. There was plenty of time to relax on the beach, swim in the sea, or go for cocktails in town. The all-you-can-eat hotel buffet was definitely a highlight. On the last night there was a barbeque on the beach with a DJ and karaoke, which was the perfect way to end a really fun week.

For me, the best part of the experience was making friends with trainees from across Europe. Everyone was so friendly and chatty, and I had so many interesting conversations. We compared training programmes, working conditions, pay, ethical and legal issues, and pressures on healthcare systems. What might seem normal in one country could be abnormal in another. Some trainees found it hilarious that I used to draw lungs and an abdomen when documenting examination findings on paper notes.

It was interesting to learn how different the role of the internal medical trainee is in different countries. One trainee from Israel told me that he intubated patients and ventilated them on the general medical ward! Another trainee from Turkey told me that they interpreted their own blood films using the microscope on the ward. I was surprised to hear about the long working hours and low pay in some countries. I gained perspective and appreciation for aspects of UK training, such as the ability to go less than full time.

Overall, the ESIM summer school was an incredible experience, and I feel so grateful that I had the opportunity to attend. I came home with updated medical knowledge, awareness of rare diseases that I have never seen in the UK, and a better understanding of different training pathways across Europe. I have a greater appreciation for the positive aspects of UK training, and I have made friends across Europe that I hope I will keep in touch with. I would highly recommend the ESIM summer school to anyone interested in applying. Thank you to RCPE for funding my place.