

Field Report Clinical Placement Nursing in Copenhagen

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Rigshospitalet Copenhagen, Denmark

Student Bachelor Nursing, 4th year of study (C-Module)

Copenhagen, it's you

Let's start with why I chose Copenhagen as my destination for the clinical placement. I always had a fascination for Scandinavia, or pretty much northern and cold places in general. As the placement had to be in Europe it was pretty obvious in which direction I was heading.

But my love for Copenhagen started a bit earlier. One day, about two years ago, a friend and me spontaneously chose to go abroad for the weekend. We didn't know where to go, just that we'd like it to be somewhere north. The cheapest flights were to Copenhagen, so that was where we were heading. From the moment we arrived I felt home. I can't describe why, just something about this city, the people, the vibe made me feel at peace. So when the international coordinator told me about one student she already sent to Copenhagen and therefore already had the connections, it was pretty convenient to go there as well.

Organizing the adventure

The whole organization was pretty easy. The international coordinator set me up for this international program in nursing at Metropol University. All I had to do was to fill out some papers and I was enrolled at the school. The school was going to find a clinical placement for me. Some weeks later, I was informed that I could do my internship at the Neonatal Ward in Rigshospitalet. Following that, it was time to organize a place to stay, which I could do through Metropol. I got an information sheet with different student homes. I could make a priority list of where to stay, got an offer a bit later, accepted the offer, signed the rent contract, paid the rent and it was all set. I was ready to go.

Life in Copenhagen

First thing you'll recognize in Copenhagen: everybody is riding bikes. You ride your bike everywhere, all the time. It's amazing. The biking lanes are pretty big, have their own traffic light system and in the evening you even get to experience rush hour on the bike. My student home was in Tingbjerg, also known as the ghetto of Copenhagen. If you get over the rather bad reputation and the distance from the city (approx. 30 mins by bike), it

was actually quite nice. There was this big park with a lake right next to the home, which was especially nice in winter.

The city life is great. There is always something up, something happening. From Christmas markets, various musical or artistic events, sports events, drinking and eating. Whatever you want, I'm pretty sure you'll find it. And as soon as the sun is out, which honestly doesn't happen too often in Denmark, every single person in the city seems to be outside.

But most of the time it's cloudy, rainy, very windy and dark. The winter is long and the days are short, with complete darkness at 3pm at worst. Doesn't seem too appealing to most people I'd say. But being a Pluviophile, I certainly loved



Bikes: a must have in Copenhagen



Botanical Garden with the Australians

Danish weather. So how are the Danes surviving the winter? The Danes explain it in one word: Hygge. It pretty much means being inside, in company of good friends and family, usually combined with a lot of good food and drinks, playing board games and talking. Just pretty cozy and relaxed.

Clinical placement

I worked at the neonatal ward at Rigshospitalet. It's a university hospital and the most specialized one in all of Denmark. So as you can imagine, there was a high standard and some really interesting cases. The neonatal ward was made up of three teams. One of them had the really small babies, born GA 22-28, one team had the older babies up to a year with surgical cases. I worked in team three, which had all the other neonatal cases. Everything was new to me: Neonatology, the language, the system. The first few weeks I was mostly following other nurses, waiting for them to give me orders to do something. I must say it was a bit frustrating in the beginning. But for that I also saw a lot of really interesting cases and I learned a lot. After a while I started to get more and more competencies and my own patients.

Some main tasks at work were: feeding (mostly through the tube), giving medicine in all different forms, observing vital signs, taking blood samples, phototherapy, handling the CPAP, educate the parents about the care and special needs of their child, rounds with

the doctors. Of course there came a lot more different tasks with it, depending on the case and level of intensive care. Examples for that would be handling the respirator, measuring arterial blood pressure, help the doctors perform procedures or intubating, pre- and postoperative care.

A huge priority in the care in Rigshospitalet is to involve the parents as much as possible. There are on average two babies per room, and next to each crib there was also an adult bed. We encouraged the parents to sleep there and be there as often as possible. Some parents were there almost 24/7. We slowly hand over the tasks to the parents, depending on their confidence and skill level, as well as the health of their child.

Personally what impressed me the most was the atmosphere on the ward. The way the doctors, nurses and parents worked together. Everybody was having a really positive attitude at work and you could feel it. There was a really good and balanced relationship between the parents and the staff. The same is true for the relationship between doctors and nurses. I can't tell if it is a Scandinavian thing, a paediatrics thing or both together. No hierarchy between doctors and nurses, they worked together in peace and on a very personal level. What I also realized was that everybody loved to teach. Not only the nurses, but especially the doctors loved to teach. Often they came up to me and told me when they had something interesting to do and I should watch and learn. They took their time to explain everything in detail, but also in a language I could easily understand. I knew I could ask them whatever question I had at any time, even if it was the clinic director.



Rigshospitalet

The difference between working in a hospital in Denmark and in Switzerland is hard to tell. As I have never worked on a neonatal ward in Switzerland I cannot say if it is different. But from what I've heard is that the involvement of the parents is of much higher importance in Denmark than it is in Switzerland. But then again, it could also depend on the hospital. Another difference is that you don't have to sign out medicine like Morphine or Fentanyl, and I guess that speaks a lot for the level of trust in Denmark. And then there are the working hours. They work 37 hours per week, one hour less per day. Maybe that could be a reason for more relaxed atmosphere on the ward. If they want they can also work 12-hour shifts, or day shift and then nightshift following the same day and therefore get more days off. Personally I feel like this is a really good system and improves the work-life-balance a lot.