

Introduction

I chose to spend the last year of my medical studies in Berlin, Germany. Before the practical year, I had participated in a few German courses at the Goethe Institute. Hence, although I arrived in Berlin with a B1 level in German, I was still far from fluent. Consequently, the beginning of the practical year was particularly challenging both in and out of hospital settings. However, the experience proved to be exceptionally rewarding at the end of the year, when I was finally able to work more and more independently.

Clinical Skills Development

One of the core aspects of my practical year was learning how to integrate theoretical knowledge with hands-on practice. I acquired valuable clinical skills from participating in daily hospital tasks, including admittance, follow-up, and discharge of patients. Presenting patients to superiors during rounds, physical examinations, drawing blood, ordering laboratory tests, and administering intravenous infusions and medications were essential to the daily practice. Furthermore, the different rotations offered a volume of specialty-specific tasks, for example, neurological assessments in neurology, mental status evaluations in psychiatry, ascites punctures in gastroenterology and hepatology, punch biopsies in dermatology, and assisting surgeries in ob/gyn and general surgery.

Cultural and Personal Growth

The German hospital culture and its strict hierarchy differ significantly from the corresponding structure in Norway. Initially, I found it quite challenging to adapt, probably more so due to the language barrier, as it was difficult to distinguish impoliteness from reasonable behavior lost in translation. However, as my language proficiency improved, so did my time in the hospitals. Moreover, it enriched my personal life.

Berlin's rich cultural mosaic provided opportunities to interact with people with diverse backgrounds, including medical students, healthcare professionals, patients, and other people outside of the hospital. Meeting these individuals has not only encouraged me to reflect on my core values but has also further broadened my perspective on the importance of cultural competence in medicine.

Conclusion

The clinical experience combined with the personal growth from exploring a new cultural environment has significantly matured my transition from student to medical doctor.