

Lausanne, 2017



Why I chose the European option

I chose the European option because I have always studied French throughout school, and college. I included Manchester as one of the choices for university based on its language programme. It was quite difficult to juggle the French work with University work, but in the end I managed!

Extra elective

Do this! Everyone will tell you that it's risky to go away before your final exams, but it was really such an amazing experience, I would recommend it to everyone. It's a great opportunity to get the 'elective' experience that others will get, and also to be able to fully choose where you go.

My friend and I went to Mauritius, we did a month placement in September in the ICU and Cardiology department of a private hospital. We chose Mauritius because they also speak French so we thought this would give us a little head start. Creole is the most commonly spoken language, which is really difficult to understand, and English was also widely spoken. We got to see a lot of different things, ranging from surgery, anaesthetics, and also ICU care which was quite different from England.

Why I chose Lausanne

Lausanne is an amazing place for a four month stay. I had read the reports and I was a bit scared about the prices, but really don't let that limit your choices. I knew that I wanted to be as close as I could to the mountains and Lausanne has great transport links to many different ski resorts. French language in Switzerland is also more relaxed as Switzerland is so multi-cultural, and I was aware that my level of spoken medical French may have not been good enough, so coming to Switzerland was also good making mistakes isn't so terrible.

Language

Being in Switzerland has massively improved my French. I used to be very shy, and really not enjoy speaking French in front of others, now I feel much more confident. At the start it was really hard. Going from England where you can express yourself exactly how you want, you can describe things easily and you can make jokes, to coming here where you have to think about every sentence structure, whilst making sure you aren't rude. However it gets better, you start to think less, and this allows you to feel like you can show your personality. My first placement I was very much a mute observer, but as my time in Switzerland went on, I got much more confident and at ease with trying to speak French. Now I have full conversations with people, take histories from patients, and make telephone calls (which are still quite hard) without hesitation. I think I am

really starting to enjoy the language more. I have found that I now enjoy talking in French, and I am also improving my conversational French. I also made French friends and spoke French to my flatmates, which definitely helped.

Placements in the CHUV- *Centrale Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois*

The CHUV is a massive hospital just to the north of the city, with its own metro stop. It is a campus style hospital, with many different hospitals all linked. There is an orthopaedic hospital, a maternity hospital, a rehabilitation hospital and also an outpatient clinic building. All these buildings are linked by underground tunnels, so when it's cold and wet you don't have to go outside! The main hospital building has a canteen for staff, which takes up the majority of the ground floor, this also has a big terrace, so you can sit outside when it is sunny.

All the staff have uniforms, which are provided by the hospital. These consist of white t-shirt and trousers, and for doctors a white coat.

On your first few days you go to the *Vestiaire*, and the ladies there sort you out for your uniform. You can get new uniform anytime you like, which makes life so much easier and means you don't have to do half as much washing!

Stagiaires are expected to help the *Medecin Assistants* throughout their working day. You are paid a small salary (900CHF per stage), and expected to stay on average from 7:30-18:00 or later. You are also expected to be there every weekday with the exception of two days off called '*Congé*' per placement. These you have to pre-arrange with your supervisor before. There are also a few public holidays especially around Easter, which you can get off, so it is great to make the most of these.

There are other opportunities to go to conferences, and lectures within the hospital and at lunch times. You can find out about these by asking the *Medecine assistantes*, or looking on the CHUV intranet.



The white coats have big pockets that are so useful!



The main CHUV hospital building.

Differences in health care UK and Swiss

Culture of the hospital

I found there to be quite a lot of differences between Swiss hospitals and what I am used to in the UK. Firstly everyone in medical school does 6 years, of which in their final year, they have 'Stages', where they try and decide what speciality they want to do. They then are expected to apply to the speciality they want, and they start specialising straight away. This usually means the doctors are quite surprised if you tell them that you aren't really interested in a career in whatever speciality you are doing your stage in.

The levels of hierarchy;

3-Medicine Assistante

2-Medecine Chef du Clinique

1-Medecin Cadre/Professor (the highest rank).

Generally you talk and work with the *Assistants* and *Chef du Cliniques*, (it depends on the department) but you rarely see or work with the *Cadres*. The teams do have some feelings of hierarchy, but at the same time the assistants are friends with the Chef de Clinique's

Lunch

This is a well-respected break in the day. Everything stops for at least 45 mins, and there is a large canteen or '*Cafette*' at CHUV that is full of doctor's nurses at lunchtime. This gives everyone a chance to take a break during the day, which was a really welcome difference. In spring there is a large terrace which you can sit out on and enjoy the sunshine. The canteen also sells good food, which includes soup, salad and a main meal. Or there is a salad bar. There is also a big coffee culture within the doctors, so sometimes after the *Colloque*, a group of doctors will also get breakfast in the canteen before starting.

Talking with patients

Communication skills didn't seem to be of utmost importance at the CHUV. Many times patients were spoken to quite abruptly. The examination is also very thorough, and most patients are expected to take off all their clothes, and be fully examined, even if they only have a headache. There were also often communication barriers between patients and doctors, as there are many different nationalities in Switzerland, so French is not always the first language. Occasionally it was easier for the patients if we spoke in English.

Intensive care -Soins Intensifs (1 month)

This is made up of 5 units, each which have 6 beds. There are two senior registrars and then between 2 and 3 juniors per unit. There is also one Consultant or Professor who covers all the units for the week.

General role: This was a tough placement to start on. There isn't much that you can do to help the doctors and as it was my first placement, with no other Stagiaires, I wasn't sure of my role, or how Stagiaires are expected to act. You will be assigned to a unit and then you can follow the patients. You can help take patients to the CT scanner, or to the interventional radiology. I tried to practice talking to the doctors, and did have a lot of teaching.

Average day: Starts at roughly 7am and ends around 17:00/18:00. Every morning starts with a 'Colloque' or whole team handover meeting, where they discuss any new cases. They go through all the patients on all the units. There is also teaching that happens on two mornings a week where a topic is presented or a journal is discussed. The junior doctors then go round each of the patients and update their daily plan, each plan is re-written every day (this you can sometimes help with) and it can be interesting to discuss how they take the patients off the sedative, and also how they know when they can or cannot.

The afternoon is the same as the morning. The ICU registrars are also responsible for the A&E Resus bleep, and so are called if there are any emergency cases being brought in. I was able to follow the doctors into the Resus room on some occasions and watched the management of septic patients or myocardial infarction patients from the start until they ended up in the ICU. There are also often bronchoscopies and endoscopies to watch. I was lucky that I was able to have some opportunities to put in central venous catheter lines, using ultrasound guidance. I also helped remove chest drains and performed echocardiography.

When there is nothing else to do there are computers and books to read. I would say if you are not very keen to get involved you could easily fall to the wayside in this placement. I would not necessarily recommend it to someone else, especially not at the start of your time in Switzerland, however I managed to survive and also profit from the placement so there were equally some positives to it as well.

Obstetrics-Obstétrique (1 month)

For this placement we were given a good introduction to the placement how it worked and the staff. There are quite a lot of students in this placement, as there are student midwives, and also student nurses. Then there are two Stagiaires and other younger

year students who are in the department for 1-week blocks (*cour-de-block*).

General role: for this placement you are split with another Stagiaire between Pre-natal (*pré-natale*) and Labour ward (*salle d'accouchement*). You can have a more active role within the team and it is nicer because you can speak to the patients.

Average day: Start time 7:30, end 18:00. The day starts with *colloque*, which includes the neonatal team and the gynaecology team. There is then teaching on a Wednesday and Thursday where they present a topic, or an article and then discuss it.

The teams then split off and you follow the medicine assistant.

Pre-natal: In the pre-natal ward it is mostly ultra sounding of the pregnant women to check on the babies. They are there for a number of reasons, all threats to pre-term labour. You can help the doctor perform her daily checks on the patients.

Labour ward: this is a little different as you generally do more and see a lot more. The day starts the again with the *Colloque*. The Labour ward has one junior doctor and one senior registrar. There are 10 labour rooms and a team of midwives. There is then opportunity to assist on the caesarean sections happening that day, or to try and help a midwife with deliveries. As the caesareans are performed by the junior doctors, I was able to assist in many caesareans and help with suturing. There were also many emergency procedures performed by the junior doctors such as forceps, ventouse deliveries, and shoulder dystocia deliveries. This was a good experience to see and learn how to do these. I was reading CTG's on a daily basis, and now have a better understanding of a concerning CTG.

I enjoyed this placement and the hands on things that I was allowed to do. I would recommend this to someone who has an interest in obstetrics, as by the end you have a very good understanding of the speciality.

Adolescent care-Division interdisciplinaire santé des adolescents. (1 month)

This service was quite well organised for Stagiaires, and has a timetable which you could follow. You were also the only stagiaire in the service, so that made it much easier to fit into the team and get to know everyone.

This was a service exclusively for adolescents covering care for young people between 12-20 years old. It was a GP style service which adolescents could make appointments and discuss any health problems. They could also receive social support, sexual health support and information, sport medicine support and general advice on alcohol and substance misuse.

Average day: The days in this service started at 8am and finished at 6pm. The morning starts with personal study time or whole department meetings. One day a week there is a Registrar led teaching, where doctors can discuss cases or work through simulated scenarios to try and help them deal with difficult patient situations. There is also one

half day a week reserved for 'Supervision'. This is when the junior staff members bring their cases to a big department meeting and they can be discussed. I enjoyed these meetings because it was often patients that I had seen during the week, so it meant I was able to follow the cases, without necessarily being in every follow-up consultation.

General role: The Stagiaire has two main responsibilities. The first is clerking any 'urgent' referrals from patients phoning up on the day and requesting urgent appointments. This is a great chance to practice history and examination skills along with presenting patients and planning management. The second is going to the inpatient adolescent psychiatric department or 'UHPA'. Although it has its own team of psychiatrists, the medics go down two times per week to ask the patients if they have any concerns with their health, any medications that they normally take, or any other complaints, not handled by the psychiatric team. For every new case that was admitted to the psychiatric ward, I was responsible for taking the full medical history and performing a full physical examination. I enjoyed this as it gave me a responsibility and a role within the team.

Finally on this placement you have the opportunity to go to the young offenders prison with one of the registrars. The doctor goes once a week to the prison to look after their medical needs. In this I was just an observer but it was interesting to go to a prison. The main 'Medecin Cadre' of this department is really friendly and wants to get to know you, and it is important to spend at least a day with her in her consultations. She is very interested in Functional pain syndrome, and so sees many complex cases of young people who are suffering with this.

Overall, this was a very good placement. It allows you to practice French speaking in a fairly relaxed informal environment, with a very supportive team.

ENT-Otorhinolaryngology-(ORL) (1 month)

Here there are 6 Medecin Cadres, and then many assistants and chef de cliniques. The service is split up into many different sub-sections e.g. rhinology, chirurgie peadiatrie, and otolo-neurologie. There wasn't much introduction to the service, but I was able to ask someone from the year below to find out the information. It is a big department, but also one of the leading centres in paediatric airway surgery in the world. There are again, two Stagiaires, and then up to eight Cour-de-blocks on this placement. The younger students are divided up and spread across the whole service.

General Role: You are free to choose wherever you would like to go in this placement, so I chose to go to the 'Poly-Clinique'. This is where all the outpatients go. I was lucky to be able to take history's and examine patients on a daily basis, often seeing the patients before the doctor and then presenting and suggesting a management plan.

Average day: This starts at 7:45am and the end time varies.

On Wednesdays there are interventional endoscopies, in the endoscopy unit, which are interesting to see, as they often perform 'pan-endoscopies' where they look at the larynx, do bronchoscopy and also gastroscopy, which was interesting. In the same department is paediatric endoscopy where they perform some very interesting airway surgery, which I was lucky to see.

In the *Poly-Clinique* I also shadowed the on-call doctor. This provided a great opportunity to see the role of the on-call ORL doctor. I did this shadowing a few times, and was able to see cases in the intensive care, continuous care, and also on various wards around the hospital. I also tried answering the on-call bleep, which was challenging!

An example of the ENT examination equipment we were taught to use including a mirror to look up into the Nasopharynx, and down into the Larynx!



Living in Lausanne

The town

The town is b-e-a-utiful, and very old. There are loads of things to look at, and there are views from everywhere because everything looks out at the lake from some position on the side of a steep hill. There are loads of things to see and it is great to head out of the city to one of the many different Cantons and different cities.

Switzerland is so clean, you will never see any rubbish on the ground, or on the metro, or in the lake. It is amazing. There are many amazing view points in the city, such as *La Tour de Sauvabelin*, *Ouchy*, and *Le Palais de Justice*. You will see there are usual shops, but I didn't really do much shopping. It's great just to walk through the old cobbled streets towards the cathedral and then look out from the top across the city.

Accommodation

I'm not actually sure how this was sorted, because I thought I was going to have to find a flat but in the end I received an email saying that I had housing in FMEL (*Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants Lausanne*). This was a shared apartment with four other

students, for 510CHF per month. It wasn't anything special, but I was grateful to have it as housing in Lausanne is notoriously expensive and hard to find. Mine was called *Ochettes* and was on the UNIL campus, but there was another called *Falaises* right opposite the hospital.

Getting around:

The *Swiss Mobilise* pass makes getting around super easy. I bought a monthly pass for 58CHF from the central *Gare de Lausanne* which allows you to take any metro/bus. There are also Publibikes which are like Boris Bikes, which you can use for free with your student card (once you have registered online).

I also bought a *Demi-tarif* from the gare, which gives you half price train fares on every train ticket. I ended up doing loads of train journeys so this was really good. Trains in general in Switzerland are so easy to navigate, and always on time. They are also really clean and really fast. The view from any train that you get that heads along the lake is also incredible, so travelling either east or west on the train is a must.

Bars and restaurants:

These are good, but also quite limited in comparison to Manchester. There are a few bars, which are always very full on Friday and Saturday nights. Try out, Great Escape, Etoile blanche, Bleu Lezard. However one of our favourite things was having 'Apéro' by the lake. This was especially lovely on the warm spring/summer evenings. There are also BBQ's along the lake that are free to use. For brunch there's a really great place called Blackbird café at Lausanne Flon metro stop.



Free time and fun things:

You really have to make the most of your weekends, because your weeks are always full in the hospital. Luckily four months, means quite a lot of weekends!

Skiing and Snowboarding: this was one of the main reasons I wanted to come to Lausanne, so this was a key feature of most of my weekends. We were able to visit Champéry and Avoriaz in Les Portes du Soleil, Leysin, Zermatt, Engleberg, Samöens in the Grande Massif and Verbier. All of these resorts are at your doorstep. Tickets for the train can be bought in combination with your ski pass and this saves a bit of money.

Most of the Swiss resorts have train stations right in the centre of their towns next to the lifts, so it is really easy.



Once the ski-season ended we made the most of our weekends and thanks to the trains were lucky enough to do quite a lot of traveling around. We visited Bern in one of the Swiss-German cantons where they speak *Schweizerdeutsch* for the carnival, Geneva's old town, Lucerne for the lake, Gruyère for the hot baths and cheese, and Sion for the castles. We also hired a car and did a road trip around Swiss-Italy (Locarno, Lugano, Bellinzona, Domodossola, and Fisch.)

Cully, a town about 15 mins away from Lausanne, hosted a lakeside Jazz festival (like a small version of the Montreux jazz festival) where the towns wine cellars open their doors act as venues for jazz performances, which is well worth a visit after a long day in the hospital.

There is a nautical sports centre near the university campus where you can rent SUP boards, sailing boats or kayaks, which is so nice when the weather is hot and sunny. Carnivals are a big thing in Switzerland and loads of the cities seemed to have their own ones. Lausanne's carnival was at the start of May, and filled the streets with food and drink stalls and then there was a marching band parade, where different marching bands compete to win. All the people watch the parade and throw confetti at each other.

Any information you need for finding things to do in Lausanne (or any Swiss town) can be found on their tourist information websites. There is also a great website for planning hikes (wanderland.ch). Although everyone thinks Switzerland is expensive there are loads of things you can do for not too much.

Madonna del Sasso, pilgrimage church, Locarno.



Making friends

There are Erasmus things that happen most weeks and weekends, and you just have to join the Facebook group. I was lucky to make a great group of friends with some other exchange Stagiaires. We had a lot of things in common and we formed a great group and spent most weekends together.

Conclusion: What I have learnt & would I come back.

This experience has taught me so much. About myself, about the kind of doctor I want to be, and about how medicine works in another country. It has also shown me the possibilities available to someone who can speak another language, and how many opportunities there are available to someone with a medical degree. The doctors work very hard, but they are paid well and are rewarded with holidays. After realising that it is possible to work in a foreign country I am going to try to apply to Lausanne or another French speaking hospital in Switzerland for my F3 year. I would definitely encourage anyone to go to Lausanne. Switzerland is expensive but with the bursary from the University and the salary from the Hospital you can manage your finances well enough. I did end up spending quite a lot of money, but I felt that it was an important to make the most of my time there. I had the best four months and would not change it for the world. Switzerland has stolen my heart!

I'll be starting my F1 in Glasgow and have an interest in Anaesthetics.



Plan of action arriving and leaving. Have patience.

This is hard to write about because part of the fun of moving somewhere is that you need to try and work things out. However, definitely, bring at least two copies of all paper work and forms that you have had to fill in with you. Also bring a sheet of passport photos, because everything needs a photo on it.

- 1.) Make sure that whatever accommodation allows you to move in on the date you arrive. If it's FEML you have to be there on the exact first day of the month.
- 2.) Go to the train station get your metro pass.
- 3.) Announce your arrival to the *Bureau des étrangers*. Needs proof of inscription to university '*attestation*' (this can be collected or sent by email from the SASME ladies at UNIL. You have to do this within the first 8 days of arrival.
- 4.) Go to the UNIL student office and pick up your student card, and validate it at one of the machines.
- 5) Go to the CHUV *Resources Humaine* department and get all your paperwork, and information for uniform and I.D badge.
- 6.) Load I.D badge with some money at the loading machines at the entrance to the cafeteria,

Plan for leaving

- 1.) Email the *Bureau des étrangers* telling them your new address and the date you're leaving Switzerland.
- 2.) Give back all your CHUV stuff, collect your final salary.

Good Luck!

