



European Option Placement Report

¡Madrid 2017!



(Hospital Universitario de la Princesa)



Why the European Option?

One of my main reasons for choosing Manchester Medical School was that I could continue studying Spanish alongside medicine. After having taken it to A-level I thought it would be a shame to leave a language that I really love behind. I knew that if I didn't have a structured Spanish programme I would not invest the time needed to keep up with Spanish and that medicine would take over – this was the ideal opportunity to not let that happen! Studying a language gives you the opportunity to do something different and for me it was a break from medicine. Having language lessons once a week meant that I could do something I enjoy in a friendly classroom environment, somewhat similar to being in college/six-form. The 4-month placement period at the end of fifth year seemed an exciting, yet a far away prospect when I started in first year, and was not my main reason for choosing the European Option (surprisingly!) However, this placement has been my favourite time of my 5 years in medical school! Being able to work in a hospital abroad in a different language challenges you in various ways and allows you to develop new skills that I think will make me a better doctor in the future. The European Option programme has given me a unique experience and has greatly enhanced my time at medical school. It also gives you something to talk about and to add to your CV!

Madrid

I was probably one of the most unprepared people when it came to sorting myself out and preparing for the move to Madrid. Finals were looming and they were my first priority because I knew I had to pass them first! We finished finals on the 19th January (a Thursday), got results the Thursday after and I was off to Madrid on the Saturday, because placement started on the following Monday 30th. I only booked my plane tickets the weekend after finals but if you can, book these before to avoid unnecessary stress! (The plane I wanted to take was full and I ended up getting to Madrid late on the Saturday which did work out in the end however). Whatever happens it will all be fine so do focus on finals first and do not stress too much about the move. One top tip is to make sure early on (even before finals) that your European Health Insurance Card has not expired as this is needed to register in the university in Madrid. I had to order a new one because mine had expired and it arrived just the day before I was leaving. Another student's didn't however and this was very stressful as they would not let her register without it.

Finding somewhere to live

For me one of the most worrying things about moving to Madrid was that I did not know where I was going to live. I was really lucky as I knew a Spanish family that were willing to host me for the first week whilst I looked for places. I would definitely say I made the right decision not booking anywhere before arriving and I would strongly advise you wait till you are in Madrid and have seen the place before committing to it, as landlords are great at taking photos which do not reflect the reality of the place. A couple of other Manchester students stayed in an Air BnB for the first week and you can book this in advance so you know you have somewhere when you first arrive.

There are lots of websites you can use to find rooms that are available in shared flats. I found mine through 'aluni.net' – a really good company that rents flats to students. The pictures are often not great and it is best to ring them and arrange a viewing. I told them where my hospital was and they suggested places close by which is ideal. I also joined some Facebook pages such as 'Madrid Erasmus Flats & Rooms Pisos & Habitaciones 2017 - 2018' and 'Pisos y habitaciones de alquiler en Madrid' which was a great and easy way to see rooms that were available and arrange to view them by messaging them. Other popular websites are 'idealista' and uniplaces.com.

I lived in Goya in a lovely flat shared with 4 other students (2 from the US, 1 from Brazil and 1 from France). I later discovered this is one of the 'posh' areas in Madrid and is a great place to live if you want to experience a typical Spanish neighbourhood with few tourists but a lively atmosphere. Along Calle Goya there are lots of shops, bars and restaurants as well as the 'Wizink centre' (a huge arena which hosts concerts and events such as Ed Sheeran). The location was ideal for me as it was a 15 minute walk to hospital each morning which was a huge contrast to the long commutes to Salford, Bolton and Blackburn that I was used to! It was also a direct metro line to Sol, the city centre.

Top tips for finding somewhere to live:

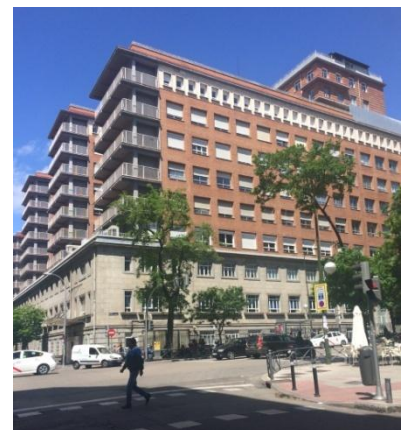
- 1) Do not feel pressured into accepting a flat because you feel you have to/scared you will not find somewhere. It takes patience and persistence but you will find one that you feel is right for you and there are lots of places! (I spent Monday- Thursday looking before finding mine)
- 2) Have a think about what you want – often very studenty flats in the centre cost more and are not as nice.
- 3) Think about where your hospital is located in relation to the flats you see. If you can't walk definitely look at the metro map and see if it is convenient.
- 4) Sort out a Spanish number as soon as you get here to allow you to ring/whatsapp people directly to sort out viewings. These can be after hospital as the Spanish are up late anyway.
- 5) Consider how much the deposit is and if you have the money or need to withdraw it (often a maximum amount you can withdraw each day). If an agency is charging a ridiculous fee it's often best to avoid it.

After moving into your own place life in Madrid finally starts and you can enjoy the next few months stress-free!

Hospital placement

I was based at Hospital Universitario de La Princesa (Diego de León metro station), an impressive hospital in the centre of Madrid, for 3 of my placements and El Niño Jesus (Madrid's main children's hospital for paediatrics). It is one of the 4 teaching hospitals associated with La Autónoma university and is ideal if you want a friendly good-size hospital that is easy to get around. My placements were in Digestivo, Neurología, Medicina Interna and Pediatría (El Niño Jesus).

I chose my placements based on feedback from previous reports and I knew that I wanted a paediatric placement in the children's hospital so I specified this when asked by email. Whatever placements you get though you will learn something new!



Day 1

- Do not be daunted if on your first day you have not received clear instructions on where and what to do. Another Manchester student and I used our deductive skills and went to the University campus located in Cantoblanco where we found the Erasmus/International relations office. To get here the best way is to take the Cercanías train from Sol as it goes directly to the campus. You need to have your European Health Insurance card, your passport and a photocopy, as well as a printed certificate of arrival for them to sign and

stamp. You then upload the arrival certificate onto My Placement to receive the Erasmus grant. (Take photocopies of everything just in case!)

- The next step is to go to the medicine campus which has its own International Relations Office (Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales). This is located just behind La Paz (a gigantic hospital complex). We were unsure about where to go and headed into La Paz where after some confusion we were then redirected! Here you will be told who to report to in your base hospital and get the information you need to start your placement.
- The next day I went to my hospital where you go to 'La docencia' the teaching centre. They then gave me a locker and confirmed my consultant's name and where to find them. NB/ the woman was new and wished to change my placements and the dates to fit in with those of final year Spanish students but after a lot of negotiation and explanation she rang the office to confirm that I could do what had been confirmed on my learning agreement! Do not be afraid to be direct and persistent if your placements are confirmed according to the learning agreement and they are the ones you want to do. Best thing is to not get stressed because they will sort it out eventually.
- They should also give you a form to fill in and get signed off for each placement to prove your attendance.

Placement 1 - Digestivo

Having been given the name of my consultant, Dra Luisa Garcia Buey, I went up to the digestivo planta on the third floor and asked the secretary who told me to ask in the 'medico-residente office' – I knocked and walked into about 20 doctors mid-meeting! I was really surprised that my consultant was expecting me, however, and knew my name when I showed up. She introduced me to the team who were very welcoming and I joined a team of residents for ward round (consultants rotate each day just like in England so it is likely you won't see your named consultant every day). There were 3 other final year Spanish medical students on this placement and this was ideal as they helped me settle in and showed me how the hospital works, as well as how to use the computer system. It was also good to understand what is expected of final year students. They were really friendly and became my first Spanish friends. We went out a few times for drinks and lunch and I went to see the medical student drama group perform 'One flew over a cuckoo's nest' which was great.

The placement was essentially 8am – 3pm which is the usual working hours for doctors here. (There is no lunch break!) In the morning there is handover and twice a week a 'sesión clínica' where a doctor presents a case or lectures on a topic of interest. Following this we would go on ward round, known as 'pasar planta'. Patients had a variety of problems including gallstone disease (cholecystitis, biliary sepsis), liver disease, colon cancers, GI bleeds as well as pancreatic conditions (acute pancreatitis, pancreatic cancer). It was really interesting to see these conditions in practice as I had never had a gastroenterology placement in the UK and after finals you feel more familiar with their management. Apart from ward rounds you can also see procedures such as ERCPs and colonoscopies.

This placement was one of my favourites. This has a lot to do with the team I was with (2 residents each day which were the equivalent of an f1 and registrar) and then a consultant. They were very welcoming and friendly and it was clear they loved medicine and their patients and were happy to



teach. I did not expect to learn a lot of medicine whilst in Spain but I think I learnt a great deal just by watching and following patients through. Seeing the same patients each day allowed me to understand what was going on and to familiarise myself with management plans. At first it was a blur but slowly you will begin to understand what is happening and will find yourself really enjoying it!

Placement 2 – Neurología

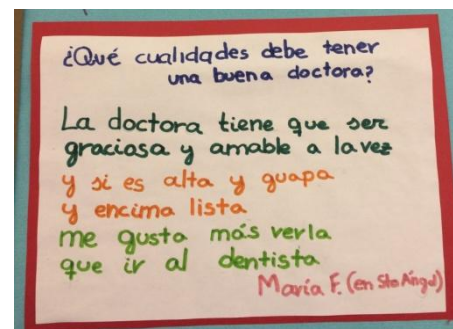
My second placement was in neurology and I again just had the name of my supervisor (Dr Nombela) and I went to the ward to ask around for him. He again was expecting me and arranged for me to spend 2 weeks on vascular, 1 week in general neurology and 1 week in clinics. This was good as it allowed me to have a varied placement. Vascular is essentially the stroke unit where you can see and examine patients who have had an acute stroke. General neurology involved cases such as Gillian Barré and interesting clinical signs. Clinics were very similar to those in the UK but allowed me to see patients with Parkinson's, cognitive impairment and migraines as well as some more complicated cases. Although the doctors were nice and friendly this was the placement I enjoyed the least. I think this was because the level of Spanish needed to be able to examine and communicate with patients was very high and I did not feel I had reached this level. To be able to examine cranial nerves for example required clear instructions and I felt limited in my ability to participate which was frustrating. I have always find neurology challenging and I felt out of my comfort zone. If however, you enjoy neurology and are confident in this speciality you will see lots of interesting cases. In any case the doctors are nice and relaxed and will often invite you to breakfast before starting the day!

Placement 3 – Pediatría

My third placement in paediatrics was at the children's hospital – El Niño Jesus. It was nice to be able to experience a different hospital but it did feel a bit strange starting all over again and trying to find my way around a new place. The hospital is located just behind Retiro park, perfect for sunny days! I had the name of my supervisor and his secretary and was shown where to find them. My supervisor had no idea I was coming but arranged for me to go to Paediatric ICU (PICU). Fourth year students were on placement at the same time so popular specialities like A&E already had students in. The PICU is very impressive as it has recently been renovated with all new facilities. The doctors were friendly but because of how complex and unwell the children were I did not feel it was an ideal place for placement. It was rare to find children



who were well enough to talk to or examine and the cases were difficult for me to understand (even in English I would have struggled!). I did see a rare condition called 'Ondine syndrome', a newborn with an adrenal tumour and I had the opportunity to watch sedation sessions. In these I saw children with leukaemia receiving chemotherapy, colonoscopies, and botulinum injections. For the last week I arranged with the secretary to attend endocrinology clinics which I really enjoyed. In these I saw children with short stature, Edward's syndrome, and diabetes mainly. On reflection I did see and learn a lot and if you are interested in paediatrics I would recommend a placement here. (Spanish kids are really cute and I often found it easier to communicate with them



than with adults!) If you don't like where you have been placed or want something different it is definitely worth speaking to your supervisor/secretary as you don't lose anything by trying and we are only there once!

Placement 4 – Medicina Interna

Before you know it you will be on to your last placement which for me was back in La Princesa on internal medicine. This was one of my favourites because the patients were very varied and interesting and by this stage my level of Spanish allowed me to easily understand what was happening with patients. I was able to input into discussions and write up simple notes which when I started 4 months ago would have been unthinkable! The ward is on the 10th floor and the views from the office over Madrid are beautiful. I was with Dr Berta Moyano who was one of the best doctors I met in my time in Spain. She was very thorough and systematic and took great care and interest in her patients, as well as taking the time to teach me. Internal medicine involves patients with varied but complex conditions and reminded me of GP in a hospital setting. I saw an elderly gentleman with vocal paralysis and headaches who was thought to have a tumour, a lady with non-resolving cellulitis diagnosed with cutaneous lymphoma, and more straightforward cases such as pneumonia and heart failure. This was the ideal end to my placements in Spain as it was a good overview of common conditions and allows you to see many signs (murmurs, crackles etc) in preparation for F1.



Differences between Spain and England

There are many differences and it would be easy to criticise the lack of hand-washing, infection control and confidentiality without realising how great the Spanish system is. Doctors in Spain love what they do, enjoy the medicine and form close relationships with patients. They will do whatever it takes to get their patients better, are keen to look up information and share knowledge. I have seen some of the greatest doctor-patient relationships in Madrid that have moved and inspired me. One of the moments that stands out was how one doctor spoke to the family of a young father diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and how his wife explained how much they trusted her. The patient hugged the doctor whilst we all watched one of the most humane and touching interactions take place in a time of great sadness for this family.

There are no targets or unnecessary competition between professionals as doctors want to help each other. Consultants are much younger and are really good at what they do because junior doctors are really well supported throughout their training (much shorter than in the UK – 5 years to become consultant). After 6 years of medical school students study for the MIR which is a national exam, the results of which determine which speciality and training programme they are offered. After the MIR there are no further exams for doctors!

In practice, doctors just focus on the medicine because there is a lot less paperwork than in the UK and the nurses do all the practical procedures (bloods, cannulas, etc). The working hours (8-3pm) allow doctors to have a good work-life balance and generally they are much more relaxed. Doctors can wear whatever they like (jeans, t-shirts, trainers) as they wear white coats ('batas') and often wear lots of jewellery, and have their nails painted.

The Spanish system may have its own problems with many doctors not on fixed contracts, out of work and on a lower income but seeing happy doctors, that rarely complained, was refreshing and a huge contrast to the NHS.

Other observations:

- Patients live a lot longer. Very common to see patients over 90!
- Family role is very different – the family looks after a patient during their stay, feeding them, taking them to the toilet and often sleeping next to them.
- A medical history is taken in a different order with PMH and DH first before the presenting complaint (la enfermedad actual). This surprisingly works well because it allows you to build up a mental image of the patient first.
- Patients leave hospital/clinic with an 'informe' – their medical report. This is useful for them to be able to review everything and be in charge of their own healthcare.
- Confidentiality seems to be a bit of pretence. Half a curtain separates one patient from the other in the habitaciones where there are 2 patients. During ward round the other patient's family is asked to leave but often consultations are held in the corridor and the family is spoken to after the patient anyway! Sometimes family members come to the office and consultations are held in there. In part this is due to culture and patients do not seem to mind. Papers are also left on show/conversations can easily be overheard and there are no confidential waste bins!
- Doctor-patient relationship: Patients really look up to doctors (much greater respect than in the UK) and it is much more paternalistic – patients are a lot happier to go along with whatever doctors say and do not ask a lot of questions. Patients are often not presented with options and the concept of informed consent is not as well developed.
- Hygiene – no sinks to wash hands in between patients! The hand gel is often not used or empty. This was the biggest change from Salford Royal and is not ideal. Doctors sit on patient's beds and even when patients are in isolation doctors often do not gown up.
- Working hours are 8am-3pm non-stop! There are no breaks as doctors work straight through with the aim of going home to eat their big meal (la comida) at home. The eating times are different and the evening meal (cenar) is at 9-10pm!
- PIC – Pedir Interconsulta: A good efficient system for requesting input from other specialities ie. to assess patients. This is done online usually. GPs can also use this as virtual consultations to ask for help with managing patients (very useful).
- The bleep is simply a phone. You ring the person directly which makes much more sense and works brilliantly.
- Doctors are much friendlier and close within their own teams and with patients. Do not be surprised if doctors hug and kiss you even if you have just met them!

Overall the Spanish culture is reflected within the medical environment as in general the Spanish work to live and not live to work. They enjoy life outside of medicine and enjoy socialising with one another. They work hard whilst in hospital but are then able to enjoy life away from medicine which is much healthier than in the UK, where long hours and draining shifts means that doctors can do little else apart from work.

Living in Madrid

Madrid is a great city to live in that you can only fully appreciate by living here (a short visit does not do it justice!) There is always something going on and things to do. Aside from great tapas and the culture of 'tomar algo' my favourite place was Retiro park which is perfect for afternoons in the sun

and taking a little boat on the lake. Gran vía has a lively atmosphere and is full of shops and theatres (known as 'the Broadway' of Madrid). For the best view of the city I would recommend 'Circulo de Bellas Artes', a rooftop terrace, and it is also worth visiting Casa de Campo and taking the cable car. Also do not forget to have churros y chocolate in the famous Chocolatería San Ginés.

One of the best things about living in Madrid is how easy it is to get around. Using the metro you can get just about anywhere and it is amazingly cheap – 20 euros a month for the 'abono joven' which is the transport card you can get if you're below 26. To get this you need to book an appointment and go to a metro stop that has an office where you fill in a form and take the necessary documents. The quicker you do this the better!



<https://www.tarjetatransportepublico.es/CRTM-ABONOS/entrada.aspx>

As Madrid is located in the centre of Spain it is ideally located for travelling and exploring. I visited Toledo and Segovia which are both approximately 1 hour from Madrid by coach and can be seen in a day. Toledo is a beautiful historical city with great views and Segovia is known for its impressive aqueduct and cathedral. I also took the AVE (high speed train) for weekend trips to Barcelona, Zaragoza and Alicante. On one bank holiday (puente) we travelled by car to the north of Spain to a ski resort called Formigal.

I would recommend taking every opportunity to travel and explore Spain because it has greatly added to my experience and allows you to see what the country has to offer (much more than just beaches and great weather!)

Spanish culture

The main thing that stood out to me whilst in Spain is how family-orientated it is and the care and respect for the elderly. It is very common to see families of many generations out for a walk, having a meal or a drink. The sense of responsibility they have to the elderly population is evident and inspiring. As well as this it is nice to see older people out and about in a city that cares for them. Retiro park has an area designated for 'mayores' where they can do simple exercises such as biking whilst on a bench to keep fit! Spaniards enjoy socialising in groups and going out for a drink is a way of relaxing. This is different to us in England where we often prefer staying in after a day's work, as staying in our PJs and watching tv is more appealing! Unlike the UK they don't live for the weekend as weekdays do not just involve work – there is plenty of time for fun after a working day...

Another big difference is the eating times. Spaniards have breakfast before or at work and then do not eat until 3pm when they have their 'big' meal (la comida) at home. At 9 or 10pm (la cena) they will then have dinner which is usually a healthy mix of salad, tortilla, fish or meat. Some restaurants have weird opening times and close from 4pm to then reopen at 8pm! This takes some getting used to and I always had a cereal bar in my lab coat pocket for when I got really hungry at 12/1pm on the ward.

Favourite things in Spain:

- Pan/tostada con tomate. This simple but delicious breakfast can be had at any time and is very cheap.
- Bocadillo de calamares – very tasty and perfect for lunch.
- Una palmera de chocolate from a panadería (pastry shop)

- Tapas at Lateral. There is a really nice one on Calle Fuencarral that serves the best tapas I've had whilst in Madrid. There is always a queue though but it is worth the wait. Try the croquetas!
- Siesta! After a day in hospital I found that a little siesta was a perfect way to relax and re-energise so that you can make the most of the evening and night life.
- Ojalá restaurant/bar in Malasaña - downstairs is a beach bar with sand and lights!
- A football game at the Bernabéu – if you can get tickets the atmosphere is unforgettable.
- Strolling through Retiro at the weekend.
- The millions of cute coffee shops that often have a great street view. The Malasaña area has plenty.
- The relaxed and happy lifestyle where spontaneous last minute plans are normal. One Spaniard told me that it was so strange how in England we plan things weeks and months in advance...

The four months will just fly by and my biggest piece of advice would be to enjoy every moment of it! Learn how to become a Spaniard by enjoying each moment stress-free and becoming more relaxed about everything. Go out whenever you can and realise that stopping for a 'café con leche' o 'una caña' will not do you any harm! The warm and friendly nature of Spaniards is infectious and you will meet some lovely people who know how to enjoy life.

We only get one opportunity to be post-finals, not in a job, and living in Madrid so make the absolute most of it!!

¡Disfruta de la aventura!

(If you have any questions then feel free to drop me an email on lori@londonmadrid.com)