**OOPE Inspiration**

**Fran and John Field, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea 2009**

We arranged a year of OOPE in 2009, part way through our training on the York GP training scheme. We set our hearts on New Zealand, having heard from friends about the fantastic outdoors lifestyle there, and the positive way junior doctors are treated.

We had excellent (free) guidance from Dee at Gold Standard locums (www.locums.co.nz) who arranged posts in Paediatrics and O+G and walked us through the process of visa and NZ medical council applications until our arrival at Whangarei hospital, in beautiful coastal Northland. We probably underestimated the challenge of moving to a foreign country, finding accommodation, cars, phones, bank accounts and starting new jobs all within a few days! But perhaps the advantage of going to a small DGH was we had help from some very supportive consultants plus the HR department, and also the wonderful people at Happy Valley Lodge.

The clinical work was broadly similar to the UK, with more responsibility than we would usually expect because there were no middle grades. Consequently we worked closely with the consultants, which was great from an educational point of view. The majority of the patients were Maori which led to some interesting cultural experiences and insights, e.g. alternative family structures and belief systems. There was an instant friendship group of other UK junior doctors sharing the same experience as us, which meant we could make the most of our relatively short time there - fishing, surfing, BBQs and camping were regular activities and we have some very special memories of our time there.

Whilst in Whangarei we somewhat serendipitously came across the charity Oceanswatch (www.oceanswatch.org), who are concerned with marine conservation across the South Pacific. Through them we went to an island off the coast of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to help at a rural health clinic and gather information to assist in future health and social projects. Our time in PNG was filled with challenges and fascinating experiences. Working alongside and making friends with people who live in such a different world to us, could not fail to change our view of life. We left wondering about what tiny difference we had made, with a new perspective on the big influences on health - the fundamental environmental and social factors that seem to get forgotten about in our pharmaceutical driven Western world.

**Hayley Morton, Homeless Health Service, Australia 2012**

During my OOPE I worked as a GP Registrar for homeless people in Sydney, Australia. I was part of the 'Homeless Health Service' (HHS) at St. Vincent's Hospital - a team of healthcare professionals including drug and alcohol workers, a specialist social worker, mental health nurses, psychiatrists, and an experienced physical health nurse. Together with the specialist nurse we ran out-reach clinics in food kitchens and homeless shelters. I also ran a clinic in the drug and alcohol detox unit. We had the luxury of using customised 'HHS' branded smart cars, which were handy for the occasional on-street clinical assessment!

I learnt a great deal working with this vulnerable patient population. Their life stories were fascinating; I learned of how they came to homelessness and what life was like on the streets of Sydney. We even spoke about why one doorway was preferable to another – i.e. good lighting, 24hr opening hours and CCTV cameras for his safety. Sadly, many struggled with complex co-morbidities, mental health and significant drug and alcohol problems.

I missed the centralised care and structure of working from a GP Practice, and found mobile care using a laptop very challenging. Without centralised patient records, we often spent hours ringing multiple hospitals to chase patient's medical records. Another difficulty I encountered was medication costs. Despite having symptomatic hypothyroidism two of my patients declined to buy Thyroxine (even at government discounted price), as it was a cost they could not regularly afford.

My OOPE clearly gave me a taste of a different healthcare system as well as an insight into a unique group of patients. I also learned a great deal from my inspirational colleagues. I loved living in the buzzing metropolitan city of Sydney. We took full advantage of Aussie life and lived a short walk from the beach and enjoyed the delicious food, went to shows at the Opera house, drank good coffee and were spoilt with the fantastic weather! We managed to explore some of Australia and squeezed in a short trip to New Zealand. I would definitely recommend the OOPE experience

**Katie Lazenby, Ghana and Zambia, 2012**

I spent 10 months in Ghana and Zambia in 2011/12 working in rural clinics with my husband. Our trip to Africa was an exciting but unusual honeymoon! The medicine was certainly challenging and very different to working in the NHS. In Ghana we had access to some basic investigations and a limited formulary. However, facilities were even more basic in Zambia and diagnosis often meant waiting to see if antibiotics would work and then sending the patient to hospital if they deteriorated. We saw patients with HIV, malaria, snake bites and more familiar diseases, such as diabetes, that presented much later in consequently much sicker patients. We also saw how difficult it is manage conditions such as multi-drug resistant TB when flooding prevents patients getting to clinic for their medication. I helped with training the clincal staff and ran a health promotion session at a local church for men. Aside from having to practice with limited resources, quickly learn how to manage uncertainty and adapt expectations of outcomes to a developing world setting, perhaps most daunting was having to manage teams of professionals and being expected to assume a leadership role as a doctor. Our time in Africa was certainly an exciting and interesting learning experience and certainly to be recommended.

Apam Catholic hospital and anyone interested in volunteering should email [francisyawson@gmail.com](https://exchange.this.nhs.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=xxb1IlmdqE2KjpGYGGq5pdmlNTscN9EI7qY6v7y39SIs5tLguvJiborloWEwos5Q1RzM6nbyxKQ.&URL=mailto%3afrancisyawson%40gmail.com) - the hospital manager. In Zambia it is through Luangwa Safaris Association - see [http://www.projectluangwa.org/doctor](https://exchange.this.nhs.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=xxb1IlmdqE2KjpGYGGq5pdmlNTscN9EI7qY6v7y39SIs5tLguvJiborloWEwos5Q1RzM6nbyxKQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.projectluangwa.org%2fdoctor) for more details.

**Hannah Powell, Billy Riordan Memorial Clinic, Malawi 2012**

I qualified from the Leeds VTS in 2013. Between my GPST2 and GPST3 years I spent 4 months working for the Billy Riordan Memorial Clinic, who are based on the shores of Lake Malawi in rural Africa. With a tiny budget by UK standards, the clinic looked after a population of 15,000 people, providing primary care and basic inpatient facilities (IV antibiotics, IV fluids and some oxygen). We would see about 45 patients each day in clinic and look after patients admitted for observation overnight. Alongside our doctor duties, we would also act as the local pharmacist, nursing team and ambulance drivers as required!  
  
We stayed in a basic but beautifully situated mud hut on the shores of the lake and our social life consisted of spending time with the other GP trainees and other staff working in the clinic and visiting backpackers’ hostels nearby for meals to supplement our diet of bananas and sandy goat meat from the local market.  
  
This was a great way to spend time working out of programme and, alongside really valuable clinical experience, my time in Malawi has given me a completely different perspective on western medicine, communicating across language and cultural barriers and rationing of care in the face of unpredictable supply of medicine and resources. The breadth of experience you can gain from OOPE can make you a better GP and I am really glad I took the opportunity to do this as part of my training.  
  
You can find out more about the Billy Riordan Project at: [http://www.billysmalawiproject.org/](https://exchange.this.nhs.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=xxb1IlmdqE2KjpGYGGq5pdmlNTscN9EI7qY6v7y39SIs5tLguvJiborloWEwos5Q1RzM6nbyxKQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.billysmalawiproject.org%2f)

**Marwan Al-Dawoud, England Woman's Rugby League Team, 2011**

I trained in Yorkshire and did an OOPE in New Zealand as Team Doctor for the England Women’s Rugby League Team.

Since then I've qualified as a GP and am now doctor for Sale sharks and England Men’s rugby.

You can find out more about my experiences in the following article:

http://www.gponline.com/gp-interview-gp-special-interest-sport/article/1213051

**Africa Health Placements (AHP**)

AHP is a Human Resources for Health solutions and services organisation that has been offering overseas placements to doctors on UK postgraduate training schemes since 2006. Through the success of such programmes, the UK doctors who have worked in South Africa have helped several rural healthcare facilities survive that might otherwise have closed due to staff levels. The mutual rewards have been significant and many UK Doctors have gained a wealth of experience working in challenging posts that they have been able to then bring back to the NHS.  
  
Our work delivers profit in terms of improved healthcare and social indicators. Over 70,000 peoples' lives are affected by each Doctor who works in South African public hospital for a year. Having sent nearly 3,000 doctors to Africa, this places AHP as the biggest recruiter of foreign Doctors to the continent. We are very pleased to support Out of Programme Experience (OOPE) placements approved by UK Local Education and Training Boards and provide support through the whole process, from helping you choose an appropriate placement until you return to the UK.   
  
There is no charge for our services. However, we need to register you with the Health Professionals Council Of South Africa (HPCSA) and the cost for this is approximately £800 for different elements, which is spread over a year. Placements are for a minimum of 6 months for voluntary and  12 months for paid work (which attracts a salary equivalent of approximately £33,000 for the year). It should be noted that only graduates from certain medical schools are currently eligible to work in South Africa at the present time due to licensing restrictions imposed by the HPCSA. Please contact AHP before applying to ensure your primary medical qualification will be accepted.

The EU Liaison Martin Schroeder (email address: [martins@ahp.org.za](https://exchange.this.nhs.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=Rc_JthVyQUu70i2Gv2bTzoIB0qi7hdEIvrJnd3x3-63siMov13k59pNwYTK9UzHxx8QlGLJyNbU.&URL=mailto%3amartins%40ahp.org.za)) can answer any more detailed question you might have and discuss any ideas about what you would like to do during your OOPE.

For further information about AHP please visit the [AHP website](https://exchange.this.nhs.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=Rc_JthVyQUu70i2Gv2bTzoIB0qi7hdEIvrJnd3x3-63siMov13k59pNwYTK9UzHxx8QlGLJyNbU.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.ahp.org.za%2f)

**Alisha Symonds - Hypokrates Exchange Placement, France 2012**

Alisha participated in the Hypokrates Exchange programme in 2012 and spent time working in a GP surgery in France. The programme provides opportunities for doctors in training and newly qualified GPs to experience primary care in other countries. For more information visit: http://vdgm.woncaeurope.org/content/about-hippokrates

**Kate Reynolds – Wanganui, New Zealand 2014 to current time (March 2015)**

We are very much enjoying out time at Wanganui and are getting to see plenty of the North Island of New Zealand at weekends. Wanganui is only a small town, with little night life however people are very friendly and there are activities and plenty of stuff going on if you look for it. It is 1 – 1.5 hours to the mountain for skiing and walking. The beach has surfing and fishing. There are mountain bike tracks an easy distance from town. There are sport facilities for most sports.

The hospital is small. Departments include ED, medicine, surgical, orthopaedics, rehab, paediatrics, O&G and psychiatry. The day job is relatively low intensity (especially compared to the UK). There is a surgical, ortho and psychiatry registrar. However there are no other registrars. All the other departments work with SHO or HO's and consultants. The most challenging part of the job is the nights. There are no consultants on site, both the hospital and A&E are covered by two Junior doctors (and the doctors can be only 6 months out from medical school). One of the doctors covers ED, and the other doctor covers the wards and tries to help out the ED doctor if possible. All departments have a consultant on call from home if you need advice over the phone, and the ED consultant should come into hospital for any Stat 1 emergencies or trauma.

During the year you will be expected to probably do at least 3 months in ED and 3 months on relief (relief means that you cover people on annual leave or sick, so could be working in any department). During ED you work every other weekend, however you get days off in the week. During relief and the other jobs you will work approximately 3 weekends in three months. Each placement is 3 months and you rotate around departments. If there are specific specialities you would like to do, I would recommend informing the hospital ASAP so that they can try to incorporate your wishes (however this is not always possible as New Zealand graduate preferences take precedence).

You get 30 days annual leave for the year, with lieu days for any bank holiday's worked.