

# Dowling Club Overseas Trip Report 2020

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What a brilliant first Dowling Club experience. Dr Bewley and Dr Mohandas organised an action packed itinerary abounding with educational and cultural experiences.

A warm Keralan welcome awaited us at every turn. We arrived in Calicut and after a day acclimatising to the heat and humidity, we commenced on a first day of dermatology. The Malabar Bonhomie was organised by the IAD and consisted of a series of lectures covering a wide variety of topics. Highlights included a session on psychodermatology by our president in addition to an overview of clinical cases in tropical medicine. A lunch of a traditional sadhar served on a banana leaf was eaten by hand with questionable technique.

The drive to Bekal fort was worth the hair-raising Indian overtaking. Arriving in the golden evening light to the Taj Bekal felt a bit like stepping into paradise. We watched the sun set behind the warm Indian Ocean and felt the February blues wash away. This was not a time to relax however, as early the next morning we set off to the IADVL in Kasargod, a hospital famed in South Asia for its lymphedema treatments. We saw cases which had been treated with remarkable success with individually tailored ayurvedic soaks in addition to compression and yoga. We saw patients whose limbs and lives had been transformed by these treatments.

The last leg of our journey took us to Cochin, a thriving city in the south of Kerala. Nearby we experienced life on the soothing backwaters with a leisurely cruise past the paddy fields of Allepey. The following day we were up at the crack of dawn to head to an outpatients clinic in nearby Amala Hospital. Here, we were divided into small groups to join consultations with patients. In paediatric clinic, I saw a variety of cases which were surprisingly similar to the children I see in clinic in Cambridge. A mixture of atopic dermatitis, scabies and irritant dermatitis felt like familiar territory. In contrast, in the afternoon, patients with tropical cutaneous diseases had been invited to show us infectious diseases that we almost never treat in the UK. We saw several examples of cutaneous TB, leprosy and spirotrichosis. Thankfully, all these patients were receiving an excellent level of care and it was wonderful to see the enthusiasm of the doctors in Amala who were incredibly knowledgeable about these cutaneous diseases.

The president's dinner - a sumptuous affair on the harbour next to Fort Cochin was a wonderful way to end the trip. A four course feast of Keralan seafood delicacies in the most beautiful surroundings allowed us to reflect on the week, what we had learned and the friends we had made.