

Arav Gupta - Student Wilderness Medicine Conference, Edinburgh 2016

As I come to the end of my six years of medical studies at Cambridge, it's certainly time to be thinking about my career choices. This is something I've not had to think about before, to the envy of my colleagues in other subjects! Unsurprisingly, it is an alien concept to me and my medical contemporaries, and heading to national specialty conferences is a very good way to learn about specialities from the very best in their subjects.

Having recently returned from a fantastic elective over Summer, which gave me medical experience in both the Amazon jungle and the high Andes, I've been plagued by the travel bug ever since and no matter how hard I try, it doesn't seem to shake! So, when I saw advertised the Student Wilderness Medicine Conference in Edinburgh it didn't take long to make the decision to go with my elective partner.

A very early Friday morning train to Stansted was completely worth it to get to Edinburgh for 10am. We weren't due at the conference till evening, so we took the opportunity to spend our free hours exploring the Scottish capital. After a pub lunch sheltering from the rain, we decided to work off the grub by jogging up to the summit of Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh's very own 251m lookout. We mistakenly thought we were pushed for time, so hurried up in a blistering 20 minutes, took some photos and found we had time to visit the incredible Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition in the Natural History Museum. Very wilderness indeed.

We reached the conference at 7pm for registration very satisfied with our day! The evening was relaxed; after pitching our tent (yes, it was camping!), we settled down for a screening of *Everest* to get us in the wilderness mood. Sleep came easily in anticipation for the 2 days of talks and workshops ahead.

Having made our choices weeks earlier on our preferred speakers, we knew a little about what to expect. The Edinburgh Wilderness Medicine Committee had organised a fantastic selection of medics to speak to us. My day was extremely diverse. I heard one doctor's accounts of her 14 months at the ESA Concordia Space Analogue Station in Antarctica, another's experiences at refugee camps in Lesbos, Greece, and a particularly inspirational medic's advice about being an air ambulance doctor. As well as inspirational talks, there were opportunities to attend workshops about the basics of planning expeditions from a medical perspective, and to learn some aspects of advance trauma life support such as intubation. It wasn't all inspirational stories though. There were practical talks from younger doctors about the best way to get into Wilderness Medicine, and the opportunities that are out there for medical students. I certainly spent my 48 hours there completely enthused by all the doctors around me and incredibly keen to learn from each one! This was totally down my street in terms of a future career option and was real food for thought (as was the delicious haggis burrito that I got for dinner on the Saturday night!)

One highlight was to hear about some of the high-altitude research undertaken by a Navy doctor. My elective was mainly done at high altitude as this is an interest of mine. Human physiology was my part II subject and physiology in extreme environments is an amazingly interesting subject. Hopefully I might be able to keep in contact with him and see if there is scope to become involved in some research in that field too!

After a packed couple of days in the Broomlee Outdoor Centre, I left exhausted but well and truly satisfied. If getting a clearer idea of where I want my career to go was my objective for the weekend, this aim was fulfilled 100%. As well as that it was immensely enjoyable and it was a pleasure to share the time with like-minded students from across the country. I would thoroughly recommend this

conference, which changes location every year, to all medics at Pembroke who have any love of the outdoors at all!