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## **MYTISHCHY EXCHANGE PROGRAMME for two DUTCH MEDICAL STUDENTS, 18 November - 2 December 2012.**

### **Abstract**

*This year, for the first time, there was an exchange of medical students. Michele Eisenga and Kyrill Rykov were offered the opportunity to go to Russia and learn about the country and its health care system. They were brought into contact with Andrey Melentev, who visited The Netherlands in 2011, and with his help they were able to shape the program to some of their interests in medicine. They saw a lot of different departments in two different hospitals. During the first week they visited the Erismani Institute, a hospital primarily focusing on occupational diseases and research. They visited the department of Neurology, Functional diagnostics, Rehabilitation and Dermatology. They were shown around the wards and saw some of the treatments the patients received. The second week was spent at the Mytishchy Hospital, a regular hospital with more common illnesses and patients. They spent only two days there due to their busy program, but still had a chance to see a lot. The department of Cardiology (dr. Lebedev), Neurology and Dermatology were visited. The next day they went to the Surgery department and operating rooms and Dr. Chvorov showed them the Urology department and the ICU. During their stay they came to learn a lot about the Russian health care system and were impressed and at times surprised at the differences in the system compared with the Netherlands. Also they were very charmed by the hospitality of the people who received them. Despite the busy program they were also able to make a few cultural trips, mostly to Moscow. One of the highlights of their trip was a meeting with de Dutch Ambassador mr. Ron Keller at the Dutch Embassy in Moscow. Our retiring board members Guus de Groot and Kees Tuinman were also there. In conclusion, we can say that - although it was the first time – it was a great success. As they themselves concluded: “This experience will stay with us for the rest of our career. Nowadays it is becoming more and more crucial to work with other countries and cultures and this opportunity is one nobody should decline!” A great compliment to those involved in organizing and facilitating this visit.*



*Kyrill Rykov and Michele-Freerk Eisenga (R), medical students Groningen University*

## **MYTISHCHY STAY for two DUTCH MEDICAL STUDENTS, 18 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2012.**

### **Visit report**

For over 20 years DEMMA has been, and still is, an organization that stimulates and supports the exchange experiences and knowledge with the largest country in the world, Russia. Not only on a medical, but also on a cultural level and the success has been remarkable. For many years these exchanges have been between already established healthcare practitioners. This year, for the first time, there was an exchange of medical students. We, Michele Eisenga and Kyrill Rykov, were offered the opportunity to go to Russia and learn about this amazing country and its healthcare system and we would like to share our impressions. First we will give an account of the time we spent in the hospitals, our impressions and differences with The Netherlands and we will finish with our impression of the Russian culture. Beforehand, we knew little to nothing about the Russian healthcare system and we did not really know what to expect. Fortunately, we brought into contact with Andrey Melentev, who visited The Netherlands in 2011, and with his help we were able to shape the program to some of our interests in medicine. We were able to see a lot of different departments in two different hospitals. The first hospital we visited during our first week was the Erismani Institute, a hospital primarily focusing on occupational diseases and research. This was not a regular hospital, as we were told, and the patients had different diseases than you would see in a regular hospital. Also the diagnostics and treatments were somewhat different. In Erismani we visited the department of Neurology, Functional diagnostics, Rehabilitation and Dermatology. The whole department and the patients' rooms were shown and we could see some of the treatments the patients received. We also participated in a conference where a difficult patient and her illness were discussed. Although everything was in Russian, one of the younger doctors translated everything for us. The second week we spend at the Mytishchy Hospital. This was a regular hospital with more common illnesses and patients. We only spent two days there due to our very busy program, but we still had the chance to see a lot. We started with cardiology with dr. Lebedev who asked us a lot of questions about ECG's, illnesses and treatments. We went to one of the departments of neurology where patients with strokes were treated and we had a short visit to the department of dermatology, which was comparable with that in the Erismani. The next day we went to the surgery department and had a look how things were organized there. Dr. Chvorov showed us the Urology department and the ICU. We went to the operating rooms where we had the chance to see the OR's and how the operations were performed. Kyrill was even able to scrub in and assist with one of the operations. In short this is how we spent our time in the two hospitals. As said before we did not know what we were to expect in the hospitals, we could only guess. Overall we think the medical protocols and knowledge is very comparable with that of The Netherlands. But the infrastructure is less sophisticated. For example, a regular patient room has 6 beds in it and the room itself is not as well equipped as here in The Netherlands. This is the case in both hospitals. When we look at the Erismani, we saw that



some treatments there are very different to ours, some of the treatments we had not even heard of. Other treatments are almost never done in a hospital in The Netherlands, but by physiotherapists on an out-patient basis. We think the biggest difference we saw, was at the department of surgery and the OR's at the Mytishchy hospital. The hygiene level was very low, when compared to The Netherlands. There were two operating theatres in every room and they were not separated by a door. One could freely walk from one into the other. Also the 'sterile' robes were sometimes stained as they were washed every time, instead of disposables robes we use. This was something that surprised us most. On the other hand, we did see a lot of improvements were being made. We saw a totally new cardiology angiosuite, both hospitals had their own CT-scanner and the Mytishchy Hospital also had a MRI-scanner, but unfortunately it was broken when we visited it. We were told that more improvements are being made, albeit slowly. The healthcare system itself also has its good and bad sides. The healthcare is free, but patients have to pay for all the medication and medical tests themselves. Also, prescription drugs can be freely bought in a pharmacy, from painkillers to antibiotics, everything. Partly due to DEMMA there are some General Practitioners in the Moscow region, but most of the people go to a specialist directly, which is different from The Netherlands. We came to learn that the healthcare system is very badly funded by the government and it is not likely to change soon. Moreover, the insurance companies will probably become more powerful and will decide how the future of the healthcare will be. On the upside we can say that some of the screening programs are better organized, although it is debatable whether this is a good thing or not. We think that it is better for some of the illnesses, mainly cancers. And also the national donor registration is better and the waiting list for transplantation is much shorter. In conclusion, we can say that we learned a lot in these two weeks about the Russian healthcare system. We saw many departments and the way doctors worked, how the doctors are being educated and we even went to a nursing school to see the differences with nursing education and their function in the hospitals. We learned about the differences between the two countries, but also the resemblances and the many improvements that are being made. Finally, a short word about the cultural program. Most of our cultural trips were in Moscow and because it is such a big and beautiful city, two weeks is just too short to see all the sites. What we did see was all amazing. We went to the Tretyakov museum and saw the magnificent art of Russian artists. We went to two concerts, visited the Kremlin and the Red Square, many churches and parks, new and old. We are probably forgetting half of the things we have seen, but fortunately we have many pictures to remember it by. And I think the most important thing is the people we have met. Although sometimes the English language was a minor problem, we were always guided everywhere by amazing people, many of them also doctors. If there was just a small problem (we actually had none!), everything could quickly be solved. Words cannot describe the hospitality we received! All in all, it was a great experience and one we will never forget. We have learned a lot, did and saw even more. This experience will stay with us for the rest of our career. Nowadays it is becoming more and more crucial to work with other countries and cultures and this opportunity is one nobody should decline!!



Kyrill Rykov and Michele-Freerk Eisenga (left), medical students Groningen University