



Volunteer doctor's experience of the free cardiology echocardiogram clinic in Mannar, November 2017

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I took part in the Echo in Sri Lanka project, supported by Assist RR, in November 2017. I responded to an email that was sent out via the BJCA. Temporary registration with the Sri Lankan Medical Council was relatively straightforward, involving the completion of a 2-3-page form and proof of qualifications.

On arriving in Colombo on the Saturday night, I was greeted by a driver organised by the charity. Here I met Gemma, the other doctor taking part. We were driven to the hotel Mount Lavinia (which is lovely) to meet up with Mayooran and rest up before travelling to Mannar, in the northeast, the next morning. This journey took most of the day on Sunday and we had the opportunity to see some sights along the way, including a stop in Anuradhapura to see the Temples.

The people of Mannar were warm and accommodating. We stayed at the hotel Agape. The manageress was extremely friendly and made us delicious home-cooked Sri Lankan food on the evenings that we were at the hotel.

The clinic ran from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday. Gemma and I performed most of the echoes (mainly adults – some paed's) while Mayooran did the consulting. It was an extremely rewarding experience. As well as providing a much needed service to the people of the area, as I had never been to Sri Lanka before, I learned much about their culture and history. The patients and staff were lovely, lunch was provided by the hospital and I had my fair share of fried rice and fish!

What struck me most was the appreciation not only of patients but of other medical colleagues at the hospital. There was a presentation held for us on the Wednesday morning, to thank us, despite the fact that we were getting just as much out of it as we were giving. We were presented with tokens of appreciation by the minister of health for Sri Lanka! Evenings were spent dining either with ourselves or, with various interested parties such as the charity founder, doctors from the hospital or colleagues from farther afield in Jaffna. All in all, a treasured experience and one that I would highly recommend for anyone thinking of doing something similar.
