

My elective with Dr. Weinstock

On a sunny October Saturday morning I was at the Toronto Pearson International airport waiting for my flight to Providence (RI) where I had to have my elective. The AirCanada plane was tiny – 14-seater and I was the only passenger on this plane. The plane crew joked that I was about to have a private jet to Providence. That was the start of my elective experience.

On my first day at the VA hospital I had a very warm welcome from Dr. Weinstock and his staff. They showed me around and made me feel at home. Since both me, and Dr. Weinstock have a strong interest in dermatoeidemiology, the elective was focused around the dermatoeidemiology project based on data from the famous Veteran Administration Topical Tretinoin Chemoprevention (VATTC) clinical trial.

Dr. Weinstock is a wonderful supervisor. We regularly had meetings to check on my progress with the project. In addition, he made himself available at any time I had questions or small issues with data and analysis. Largely owing to his guidance, I was able to finish the project on time, and write the manuscript, which has now been submitted for publication. The abstract of our study has been accepted for presentation at the Society for Investigative Dermatology 2011 meeting (Phoenix, Arizona).

Dr. Weinstock is also a good mentor. Aside from discussing our specific project-related issues, we frequently talked about promising areas of dermatology and dermatoeidemiology research and my carrier plans and aspirations. He shared with me a few tips on how to get research grants, and have a successful carrier in academic dermatology.

He is a great scientist. While always enthusiastic about new research ideas he is extremely good in sorting out ideas that have a potential (regardless how crazy they might look at first) from those that are simply not useful. Thus, while I was in Providence he encouraged me to start another research project using the Canadian national data on bullous disease mortality. I finished this second project after coming back to Toronto but we had extensive e-mail communication, which was critical in shaping up the final research paper. The second study has also been

accepted as a poster to the Canadian Dermatology Association meeting in June 2011 and has been submitted for publication as well.

Overall, having abstracts of two different research projects accepted at two top-ranked dermatology meetings as well as two papers submitted for publication – as a result of 6 weeks elective time – I feel we have accomplished a lot! But what is more valuable for me is an experience of working with a great mentor and a scientist, and I hope this collaboration will continue.

On my way back home, I was on the same 14-seater plane. But this time it was almost full, and I realized that I missed Toronto.

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March 15, 2011