

Working Visit ICDDR'B Dhaka, Bangladesh January and February 2011

Being a resident in medical microbiology-virology at Erasmus MC Rotterdam I was given the opportunity to perform a two month "Global Health" fellowship at ICDDR'B in Dhaka (Bangladesh). I had an amazing time at ICDDR'B and in Bangladesh. I learned a lot and experienced various aspects of global health.

During my fellowship at ICDDR'B I became interested in clinical and immunological aspects of (tropical) infectious diseases including Leishmaniasis, Leprosy, Diarrheal diseases and HIV. Because of my training in microbiology and virology, I focused on diagnostics within this resource poor country. It was very interesting to learn about possibilities and deficiencies often due to a lack of financial sources.

Another important aspect of my fellowship was to observe the field studies at ICDDR'B. Field sites are often designed for a research purpose but they can also support the local community. I was very impressed by these field sites and witnessed how useful they are for the communities. I was able to visit several different projects and learned about the setup, management and local organization of these field sites.

Next, I wanted to learn about field epidemiology, specifically during an outbreak situation. During my stay at ICDDR'B there was a Nipah virus outbreak in the northern part of Bangladesh. I was provided the opportunity to join a team visiting the outbreak area. This was perhaps the most valuable experience I had in Bangladesh. It taught me about outbreak management, the encountered difficulties, the commitment and the need.

Being both a clinician and a researcher I wanted to explore the options for contributing to research at ICDDR'B. This institution is a unique setting with a lot of possibilities. I started to work with the people leading the GBS cohort. I will study the preceding viral infections. Pilots are currently running. I also contacted the team working on immune responses to pneumonia in a slum area of Dhaka. Collaboration on their work is under discussion but will most likely occur. Finally the Nipah outbreak investigation trip brought up a lot of research topics which are being explored at the time of writing.

Having been the first Dutch resident in medical microbiology that has performed a fellowship at ICDDR'B, I wish to recommend the Centre as a place for future residents or students to do part of their training. The Centre is well organized, full of opportunities and possibilities, located in an optimal setting to learn about microbiology, immunology and infectious diseases. Fellowship programs can be adjusted to personal interests. Involvement of Dutch residents in local teaching as a way of local capacity building should be considered.

Corine Geurts van Kessel
AIO Medische Microbiologie
c.geurtsvankessel@erasmusmc.nl