

INTERNATIONAL ORTHOPTIC ASSOCIATION

New York Eye and Ear Infirmary exchange

As newly graduated orthoptists from the University of Liverpool we were eager to immerse ourselves in the world of orthoptics. Before beginning our new jobs in England we were keen to taste a bit of orthoptics beyond the UK and were kindly offered the opportunity of a week's observation in the renowned New York eye and ear infirmary.

The New York ear and eye infirmary was recently named one of Americas best ophthalmology hospitals by US News and World report so this opportunity was also considered a great privilege as well as an exciting opportunity to visit the big apple!



As we were both yet to begin our first jobs we were both in a fantastic position to learn from the orthoptists in the department but also to maybe inform them of any different techniques/knowledge we had experienced on our placements and studies in the UK.

From experiencing the variation between our numerous student placements in the UK alone we were quite aware that the assessment of patients in America may be quite different to that in the UK and that we had a fantastic opportunity to further our skills and knowledge base.

We planned a short stay of 5 days working in the hospital which is based in mid-town New York, we were made to feel immediately welcome by Sara Shippman and the team who encouraged us to ask questions throughout the week. The department was busy throughout our stay so we were never short of something to do! The majority of patients seen whilst we visited were paediatric, there is also a large Spanish community therefore the ability to speak Spanish is almost a necessity within the department.

To be able to refract is also a vital skill which is not commonly used within orthoptics in the UK, all the members of the orthoptic team are considered expert retinoscopers and this is something we both are keen to take on as orthoptists in the UK. Not only does being able to refract shorten the

patient-clinician time but it allows us to combine both orthoptic and optometric knowledge to manage the patient.

During our stay in the department we also observed a muscle conference where the doctors, medical students and orthoptists all discussed the treatment of a patient with the patient present, this was interesting to see as the knowledge of the orthoptists was clearly much respected within the department to give the patient the best quality of care and it also showed the good level of communication between the orthoptists and the doctors.

We also watched the use of botulinum toxin (BT) for blepharo/hemi-facial spasm, it was interesting as BT is not particularly used in the management of strabismus in New York but it is used quite widely in the UK for both diagnostic and therapeutic uses.



As orthoptics is a relatively small profession we feel that taking part in this exchange has been an important part of the communication in the 'orthoptic world', clearly we are only at the very beginning of our orthoptic career but now look forward to an exciting future where hopefully we will bump into the lovely NYEEI orthoptists again! We would like to thank Katherine Fray for kindly organising the visit for us and we would also like to thank each one of the orthoptists in the department, the experience is one that we will certainly never forget and the knowledge and help that we have been given is something that will help kick off and further our careers as orthoptists.

Katrina Cooke & Lauren Watson

