



## Nursing and medical internship in Sri Lanka



### Overview

Our nursing and medical internship program caters to students who are currently enrolled in, or have recently completed, a medical/nursing degree from a recognized university in their home country. This is the main criteria to qualify for the program. **Participants** who have work experience in the nursing or medical field **but are not enrolled in a university will not qualify** for the internship.

Medical electives can expect to gain a broad-based understanding of how these sectors work through a range of learning experiences across various wards and units at the public hospital as per their interest (based on the availability). They also get to understand how the medical system of a developing country like Sri Lanka works and learn first-hand from local doctors and nurses, as well as contribute in the day-to-day running of the facilities.

Sri Lanka is the only country in South Asia which offers free healthcare to all its citizens, which is remarkable for the region. As such, the public sector here constitutes the vast majority of the country's medical system. Electives have access to a larger and wider network of professionals, volume of patients and exposure to a comprehensive set of wards and special units.

### What our participants do on the Project

Electives have the opportunity to get broad-based rotational exposure across various wards, units and institutions, including:

**1. General Medical Units** – typical tasks include bedside teaching regarding the management of patients, ward rounds with the consultant and the medical staff, attending lectures with the local medical students, etc.

**2. General Surgical Units** – available only for **advanced medical students** (3rd year or above in their medical studies). Tasks include joining the ward rounds with the consultant and the medical staff, assisting the medical staff for wound dressing, checking vital signs of patients and observing live surgeries such as Cholecystectomy, Appendectomy, Hernia repair, Thyroidectomy, etc.

**3. Neurosurgical Unit** – tasks include studying the history of the patients with the support of medical/ nursing staff, joining the ward rounds, observing live neurosurgeries with the consultant/ surgeon.

**4. Cardiothoracic Unit** – tasks include joining the ward rounds with the consultant and the medical staff, joining the lectures, checking vitals of patients, observing live cardiothoracic surgeries, etc.

**5. Emergency Treatment Centre (ETC)** – tasks include bed side teaching regarding the management of patients, ward class with ward rounds, checking vital signs of patients (if the staff permits), observing live surgeries in casualty operation theatre and post casualty theatre under the direct guidance of the surgeon. Electives will be given explanation by the surgeon based on the type of the surgery and the ground emergency situation.

**6. Oncology Surgical Ward** – typical tasks include studying the history of the patients with the support of nursing staff, joining the ward rounds, observing how local staff monitor vital signs and perform wound dressings of patients and observing pre operative and post operative care of the patients.

**7. Nephrology Unit** – available only for advanced medical students (3rd year or above in their medical studies). Tasks include studying the history of the patients with the support of medical / nursing staff, joining the ward rounds, observing patients with various kidney malfunctions and or diseases with the consultant/ surgeon.

**8. General Pediatric Wards** – typical tasks include studying the history of the patients with the support of medical/ nursing staff, joining the ward rounds, performing activities to socialize with children (with parental consent), etc.

**9. Paediatric Cardiology Unit** – typical activities include attending paediatric cardiac catheter lab on diagnosing heart defects, its severity, observing live paediatric cardiac surgeries and attending clinical sessions with the consultants.

**10. Pediatric Cardiology Unit** – typical activities include attending pediatric cardiac catheter lab on diagnosing heart defects, its severity, observing live pediatric cardiac surgeries and attending clinical sessions with the consultants.

**11. Vascular Surgery** – available only for advanced medical students (3rd year or above in their medical studies). Opportunity to observe and assist on vascular surgeries and treatments.

**12. Psychiatry Ward** – available only for advanced medical students (3rd year or above in their medical studies). Assist local team that specializes in the treatment of mental disorders.

**11. Rheumatology Department** – available only for advanced medical students (3rd year or above in their medical studies). Assist in the treatment and care to patients with diseases of the musculoskeletal system – bone, joint and connective tissue disease.

**13. Observation of Special Surgeries** - depending on the availability, the electives will get the access to observe surgeries on a rotational basis. Surgeries includes vascular surgeries, plastic surgeries, urology related surgeries, neuro surgeries, casualty, oncology surgeries, etc.

**14. Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation Unit** – tasks include supporting patients to carry out their daily physiotherapy and occupational therapy exercises, carrying out group activities to support the patient's mental well-being and other similar activities. Students will get to work closely with a physiotherapist and occupational therapist on a regular basis.

**15. Community Projects** – this involves working at local schools, villages and community groups to create awareness and education on areas like first aid training (presentations with practical sessions), basic hygiene practices, attend medical campaigns under the guidance of medical officers, attend active teaching/practical sessions with special needs/differently abled children (with guidance) and socializing with senior citizens in elderly care centers.

**16. Ayurvedic Medicine** – A special introductory session on the traditional eastern medicinal practice of Ayurveda, which is based on a natural and holistic approach to physical and mental health. Ayurvedic medicine is one of the world's oldest medical systems and remains one of Sri Lanka's most popular and respected traditional health care systems.

**17. Community Based Activities** – this involves working at local schools, villages and community groups.

- **Disability Care:** Nursing interns are encouraged to engage with differently-abled people that need extra affection and care. They are able to help them with activities that enhance their motor and cognitive skills.
- **Children:** Educate and train the local children on first aid and basic hygiene practices in schools, kindergartens and community groups under the guidance of the coordinators.
- **Elderly Care:** Support and cheer up elderly people at elderly homes while improving their gross motor skills and cognitive skills engaging in crafting, mobility exercises and other fun activities.

- **General Public:** attend medical campaigns and health awareness programmes under the guidance of medical professionals where they can assist with health checkups and educate people on different health conditions and issues.

In addition to the wards/ units described above, medical electives also have the option to choose Community Weeks as part of their programme which provides a more hands on experience dealing with various members of the local public (as described above) through community-based activities. This also includes a special one-day session on Ayurvedic medicine so a typical community week will comprise of #16-17 mentioned above. Community week allocation is dependent on ground availability.

Special units like **Psychiatry, Rheumatology, Orthopaedic and Intensive Care Unit (ICU)** are also available on request – please check with us and mention the choice in the elective information sheet.

It is important to emphasize that the experience in the hospital is largely observation-based although certain units are known to offer more hands-on work than others. The level of engagement for each student depends on several factors including the background/skill set of the student, the rapport he/she is able to build with the local hospital staff and also the internal cultures that reside within the individual departments in the hospital. All electives are supported by our medical project coordinator who provides regular guidance and support to further enhance their learning and knowledge development. **Community week will be excluded from the hospital certification process.**

## Requirements

Electives must be enrolled in a recognized medical university in their home country. Further, the following documents are needed to apply:

1. Current CV or Resume
2. Motivation Letter (or Intent Letter) describing personal background and rationale for pursuing this internship
3. University reference letter
4. Police background check
5. Copy of passport
6. Passport sized photo
7. Elective information sheet provided by the hospital
8. Clinical or university documents that need to be attested by the hospital to certify the programme completion.

All the nursing electives should **submit all their documents six (6) weeks prior to their start date**. Nursing interns will be offered a project completion certificate (“Certificate of Nursing Training”) after successfully completing the project

Additionally, participants must understand and appreciate the different cultures when working in a country like Sri Lanka where the medical standards differ greatly from what they might have experienced in their home country. Our experience has shown that the participants who get the

most out of this experience tend to be **open-minded, flexible, respectful to local staff** and eager to learn.

As per the code of conduct of the hospital and the Healthcare project, accessories such as large **earrings, piercings, rings** and **necklaces should not be worn during the project** hours when they are in the hospitals. Sometimes the electives claim that they have certain piercings that can not be removed. In that case, they may lose access to the hospital. If they have any visible tattoos they must cover them during their project hours using an arm guard or a long sleeve medical scrubs. If any of the students do not agree with these conditions, we will not be able to send them to the hospital. Smoking during work hours in the hospital premises is strictly prohibited.

## Other Information

**Project Capacity:** Up to 20 electives at one time

**Availability:** Available throughout the year except the weeks of Sinhala and Tamil New Year and Christmas and the days on government and public holidays.

**Arrival & Departure Days:** Saturdays

**Nearest Airport:** Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport

**Project Workdays:** Monday to Friday (weekends are free)

**Workhours:** 4-7 hours per day (flexible)

**Minimum Project Duration:** 2 week

**Maximum Project Duration:** 24 weeks

**Age Requirement:** Must be 18 years or over

## Location of the Program

The following institutions are available to our nursing electives:

**1. National Hospital Galle** – this is the largest public hospital in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, and the 3rd largest hospital in all of Sri Lanka. Capacity of ~2,000 beds. It has a total of 54 wards and several other specialized units. It was previously known as “Teaching Hospital Karapitiya” and “Teaching Hospital Mahamodara” but has now been all grouped under “National Hospital Galle” as the Sri Lankan government has recently elevated its status from a regional hospital to a national one.

**2. Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital For Women** – this is the largest maternity hospital in South Asia that specializes in maternity care, offering a wide range of maternity exposure for nursing interns.

**3. Government Ayurveda Institute** – this hospital specializes in the traditional medicinal practice of Ayurveda.

**4. Community projects** – we work with various local schools and community organisations. Our electives have the option to spend some of their time at these places for a more intimate experience working with children and senior citizens if they desire.

**All of the above institutions are located within 30-40 minutes of our volunteer house.**

## **Location of Accommodation**

- AASHA House, No. 26 Temple Road, Peellagoda, Unawatuna 80600, Galle, Sri Lanka
- AASHA Beachside, Matara Road, Peellagoda, Unawatuna 80600, Galle, Sri Lanka

**Meals Provided:** 2 freshly cooked meals every day (breakfast and dinner).

**Support Provided:** On arrival, a detailed orientation & training program is provided, including health and safety training, culture training and an area orientation tour around