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Personal reflections after a month in Chapel Hill

Well I wasn't really sure what was going to happen during my visit in Chapel Hill. Of course I knew it's a leading center in functional GI disorders but still I had no idea who and what I was actually going to meet when I get there.

Well I thought to myself, worst come to worst, people say North Carolina is a pretty place and I will have a chance to do some sightseeing.

The first day arrived and I was going to see my first patient with the IBS fellow. She was a nice 60 years old patient with about a 40 years history of functional GI problems that made her life miserable. On top of that she also had some major psychological issues with severe anxiety, depression and a history of abuse. She had already been to many GI doctors as well as psychiatrists and didn't get any help from them. After the fellow and I finished taking her history I was pretty sure there is not much more that could be done to help her. Forty five minutes later, after we went back to see her with Dr Drossman I realized how wrong I was.

Treatment of functional GI patients in the UNC functional GI center is really exceptional. Patients are not treated as a defective organs that we have to fix but as people with a life story, fears, concerns and wishes. Empathy is not just a slogan but a real and powerful medical tool. Every patient gets the maximal attention and a real interest in their story and his problems. These things are not easy to achieve. In fact the vast majority of GI doctors are not even interested in trying to achieve them. It requires patience, devotion and a strong spirit that is ready to deal with failures and is willing to delay immediate satisfactions in order to get a real big one down the road. Most of all it requires that you really care (in the personal as well as the professional sense) about your patients.

Obviously, talking and listening are not enough. The use of medications also impressed me and is really ground breaking in the field of GI. After I had the chance to see their effect I will definitely consider introducing of atypical anti- psychotics into our daily practice. This is a major treatment breakthrough that unfortunately hasn't gotten enough credit and exposure in the GI literature.

I had the chance to join and observe not only Dr Drossman but also Dr Madanik, Dr Dorn, Dr Weinland and Chris Dalton during their clinic and found out that everybody are committed to that special spirit and way of work as well as being extremely professional. I had also the chance to get some useful views and opinions from Dr Whitehead and Dr Heyman and attended biofeedback sessions with Mary Sholtz. Undoubtedly their work in the pelvic floor area is also excellent and I am

currently trying to implement some of the things I have learned in our biofeedback clinic.

Moreover on a more personal level everybody I had the pleasure to contact with during my visit was always nice and helpful in every way.

I would like to take that opportunity to thank everybody for their help in making my visit such an interesting and fruitful experience and I truly hope that it would not be the last one.