

Winter Tour Report 2010 ICSM Christian Medical Fellowship (725)

Over 300 medical students and doctors from the UK and abroad attended this year's Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) National Student Conference in Derbyshire, UK from 12-14th February. Thirty-three Imperial delegates attended this year's conference, the **most** from any other medical school and the biggest number Imperial has ever seen! The Imperial group ranged from fresher to final year; with some of the final years attending conference for the 6th time in a row! With the help of our tour application and fundraising we were able to subsidise first timers nearly 50% of their conference entrance ticket. All delegates were IC CMF members and out of the 33, we had 18 first timers!



The evening before conference, Imperial and UCL students hosted a pre-conference night for the international students attending conference. This was a unique opportunity to have a time of fellowship, games and to learn from each other's respective cultures, whilst introducing the students to a London medical school. Countries represented included Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lithuania and Tajikistan. Many of the international students come from very small CMF groups and face persecution for being a Christian medic; meeting them help remind me how often I take for granted the freedom I have in the UK to practice my faith.

Friday afternoon, saw us set off from South Kensington in Imperial minibuses en route to the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanick. We arrived just at dinner to a host of glorious home cooked food that we would enjoy all weekend! The title of this year's conference was 'Crash Call: an urgent appointment with the Living God' based on the fact that in the busyness of studying, university life etc. we can sometimes neglect to give God the space he deserves in our lives. Over the weekend we had 3 main conference talks interspersed between other activities that were delivered by Pastor Terry Virgo. Conference talks were followed by review groups which gave us the opportunity to discuss what we had taken from or learnt from the talk, and also an opportunity to get to know med students from other universities.



Throughout the day we would attend the seminars of our choice. Each seminar typically consisted of 20 students and addressed issues relevant to us as students within a Christian context. Led by doctors (either academic or clinical) they permitted a more personal and informal setting to discuss wider issues. Seminar titles included: organising your elective, psychiatry, answering other faiths, alcohol and FY1 survival kit. Seminars are conference highlights for most, as you receive teaching and insight into areas that can neither be wholly taught by your med school or your church.

My personal favourite was the 'Disability' seminar, led by a consultant neurologist; we discussed a number of difficult real life case studies in which we decided whether or not we would treat the patient and what our approach would be as a Christian. One example included treating a West Indian lady who became quadriplegic following a sexually transmitted virus. Before her illness she was on the verge of taking her citizenship exam. Her passport and all evidence of legal stay were subsequently stolen. The authorities passed her over as a 'bed blocker' with no legal right to healthcare, however if she were to be sent home she would surely die. This was a personal case to the neurologist who fought for her to stay and thank God, 6 months later the patient has made a great recovery and is now a British citizen (she took the test in hospital!).

During free time we could enjoy the sporting facilities, relax, explore the CMF bookstore or the beautiful grounds of the conference centre. Some of the Imperial group enjoyed the latter where we attempted to spell out 'Imperial CMF '10'. The evening consisted of great entertainment; university challenge, a praise concert, a Celidh, film and discussion and a chill out zone (organised by one of our committee members). I tried to get to as much of the fun as possible, firstly I saw us lose to the Midlands in University challenge, then set off for the praise concert for a time of worship and prayer and then ended up in the chill out zone with a large group 'til the early hours of the morning!





As Sunday was Valentine's Day, every student awoke to a personal gift outside their room; love heart sweets attached to a scripture from the Bible, mine read, 'This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' 1 John 4:10. In the last few hours of conference we attended our final seminars, talks, made a final dash to the discounted bookstore and finally said our goodbyes whilst exchanging contacts with the new friends we had made.

This conference has been an invaluable experience for those who attended,

First timer Chris Lai (1st year Post graduate entry) says,

'The CMF conference was an amazing experience. After a hectic term in London, I thoroughly enjoyed spending a weekend in the English countryside with good food, fresh air and the Holy Spirit. Over 30 Imperial students were joined by another 300 medics from all over the UK. In addition, there were a number of students we had sponsored to come from further afield, some of whom have encountered difficulties practising their faith.

The main focus of the conference was a series of seminars of our choosing, in which small groups discussed a variety of issues pertinent to medicine and student life within a Christian biblical context. These were chaired by expert doctors who were more than willing to pass on their knowledge and experience. We were also treated to a number of interesting talks, praise and worship sessions and the opportunity to explore the conference centre and its surroundings. All of these contributed to a relaxing, friendly atmosphere of brotherhood and solidarity.

For me, the highlight was spending time with several hundred like-minded young people who were both medical students and Christians. I was able to learn a lot and look forward to going to next year's conference!'



The conference definitely met its objective as we have all been personally challenged to think about the bigger picture of Medicine, the issues we may face as Christian medics and to better know how to serve God through Medicine. This year through minibus ticket sales and travel grants we can cover the cost of transport. The total cost for first timers is £486, which is far more than we anticipated; some of which will be substed by our grants and the rest our SGI so we thank you for your generous contribution toward our tour; you have helped us send the biggest Imperial group to conference to date!



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There were no changes to any of our proposed aims, objectives and activities. We thank God because we did not encounter any major issues on tour and we arrived there and back safely. Our only improvement will be to pick up the minibuses earlier as we had some problems with the last minute checks of the minibuses which led to a delay and us nearly missing dinner! Also a group of keen freshers decided to come up by coach as not to miss their lectures, although admirable even they stated they will not do the same next year. Therefore perhaps next year we can arrange for another minibus to leave at a later time for those not able to leave in the afternoon such as those out on placements and super keen freshers.



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