From Nova Scotia to Singapore: emergency medicine in action

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EM is in many different stages of development across the world, yet during this 4-day conference, physicians come together to share and collaborate with the common goal of improving emergency medical care. Dr. Simon Field, an EM physician from Nova Scotia and a speaker at the ICEM, says it is not hard to see how much EM physicians have in common. “The same political, social, and clinical issues are prevalent everywhere, with only slight regional variations,” Field says. “Ultimately, we have far more in common than we have separating us.”

The breadth of topics on any given conference day was mind-boggling—from the role of EM in health care reconstruction in Afghanistan to clinical toxicology in Thailand to EM development in the Netherlands, Lithuania, and Bahrain. In Korea, as in many places across the world, physicians are facing the rising challenge of emergency department (ED) crowding while trying to meet the needs of an aging population. EM physicians from Canada and Singapore reflected on clinical decision making and strategies to avoid diagnostic error, and Australian physicians spoke of the importance of communication training for patient satisfaction.

Certain talks were eye-openers for someone whose only experience is in a Canadian ED. Scorpion stings, dengue fever, and the emergency management of snake bites were just some of the topics that I have not had much exposure to as a medical student from Nova Scotia.

On the flight to Toronto, the passenger’s chest pain resolves and the plane is able to stay on course.
EM physicians on board are still with the patient, talking to her, reassuring her—EM in action. This trip to the ICEM helped me realize that the EM community is a genuinely global one. The theme for the conference was “Emergency Medicine: The World Moves Forward”—what better way to describe the field of EM? From Singapore to Nova Scotia, or in an airplane somewhere over the Pacific Ocean, EM is truly a dynamic field, ever-evolving and always moving forward—no matter where you practice.

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