

Fellowship at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Dear members of the Swiss pediatric surgery association,

I was lucky enough to get to do a general pediatric surgery fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia last year.

My first impression, when I arrived at CHOP was "big" – the sheer size of the building and the different departments was slightly overwhelming but also exciting. With 60 ER (emergency room) beds, 100 NICU beds and an additional 100 ICU beds as well as 22 operating rooms this was definitely much bigger than anything I was used to.

With three other general surgery fellows we covered all shifts, during which we were in charge of all surgical inpatients as well as any surgical consults from the emergency room or other departments. Every day there were several surgeries that we were allowed to do under the supervision of an attending. So that after my time at CHOP I had completed several laparoscopic and open surgical procedures, ranging from basic pediatric surgery procedures to much more advanced cases. Besides the many technical skills that I was taught thru-out my time at CHOP, I feel like I benefited most from the huge exposure of neonatal cases. So even though the work hours were tough, the benefits I took from this experience were absolutely worth it.

But when talking about my time in Philadelphia, there was much more to my adventure than just the work experience. Besides being exposed to a different culture, I lived in Philadelphia during a pandemic. I arrived in June 2020 and at that time not only were many restrictions due to Covid in place, but Philadelphia only started to recover from the many riots they had endured during the "black lives matter" movement. Over the summer the number of newly infected Covid patients as well as the number of deaths due to Covid sky-rocketed and therefore all restaurants/stores were closed, and events shunt down. Over my entire stay in Philadelphia only the stores and slowly also the restaurants reopened, but otherwise no larger gatherings were allowed. This unfortunately meant that I wasn't able to experience this otherwise vibrant city.

Nonetheless, this was an unforgettable adventure during which I was able to meet some incredible people and enhance my medical knowledge and surgical skills.