

Late 2015, UTAS medical student and Rustica member Nina undertook a John Flynn rural medical placement. Read below what she had to say about her experiences out bush in the Northern Territory!

“In November/December 2015, I undertook my first John Flynn Placement in Jabiru, Northern Territory. I had just finished my first year of medicine, and was keen to get into a clinical setting. I was extremely excited to be able to travel to the Northern Territory for my placement, to gain firsthand experience about rural and Aboriginal health and culture.

Upon travelling to Jabiru, I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was that Jabiru is a town of around 1,135 people within the Kakadu National Park. I discovered that there is an interesting diversity within the town, with the Aboriginal community, mining workers (mainly fly-in, fly-out), plus other local non-Indigenous residents. This made for a varied learning experience.

The Jabiru Health Centre was much bigger than I expected. There is an acute-care treatment room, an emergency bay, a women’s centre, a children’s health clinic, a chronic-disease area, as well as three GP consultation rooms. There is an Aboriginal and Public Health area, where there are a number of Aboriginal health practitioners, youth workers, and drug and alcohol workers. The Jabiru Health Centre has a strong focus on preventative medicine, and on helping and educating people to better manage their chronic conditions.

In my time at Jabiru, I spent most of the time in the treatment room with the nurses. The Remote Area Nurses were absolutely fantastic – they had an extensive knowledge base, and were willing and effective teachers. I observed a lot of health issues that I was not familiar with before going on placement, many of which were distinctive of medicine in the Northern Territory.

In my time in the treatment room, I also got to practice my clinical skills, including phlebotomy, administering injections, checking blood glucose levels, removing staples, measuring vital signs, and doing adult health checks. Having just finished first year, it was exciting to be able to have some hands-on experience, and learn some new skills to bring back for second year.

There were two doctors and one GP registrar at the clinic. I spent one day with one of the doctors, and another with the GP registrar. The doctor that I sat in with had many years of experience working as a rural generalist, and his experience shone through in his excellent communication skills and rapport with patients. I loved the opportunity to be able to see this in action after learning so much about the importance of the doctor-patient relationship.

I was able to experience many other aspects of medicine in my time in Jabiru, including spending a day and night on-call with the midwife; sitting in on a women’s chronic conditions program with one of the Aboriginal Health Practitioners; spending time with the children’s health nurse; and going on outstations visits.

But it wasn’t all work and no play while I was in Jabiru! When I wasn’t at the clinic, I attended the clinic staff Christmas party; explored the Kakadu National Park with the GP registrar; went on a Yellow Water Cruise and observed many crocodiles, birds and plants; and explored Jabiru, including walking and biking around Jabiru Lake (thankfully saw no crocs there).

I absolutely loved my first placement in Jabiru, and cannot wait to go back. The people I met were kind and welcoming, and clinic staff ensured that my time in Jabiru was a positive experience! To anyone eligible for JFPP with an interest in rural medicine, I strongly encourage you to apply!" [Read More](#)