

Unforgettable Sicily

I'm Ksenia Kochetkova, a 5th year student of South Ural State Medical University, the Russian Federation. This summer I was lucky enough to have my second exchange in Neurology department of Paolo Giaccone General Hospital in Palermo, Italy. I know by heart, every new exchange opens your soul and refreshes your mind more and more. I'm thankful for this opportunity to IFMSA and I'm going to use it as much as possible.

Sicily is known as a place with a great history, the warmest relationships between people and the most delicious food. Palermo is the capital of Sicily, and Sicily is the very heart of Italy, so I wasn't mistaken in my choice.

A characteristic feature for me is the history of Sicily conquests during the previous centuries. It's completely shown just on example of one church – the Palatine Chapel, which was done in Arab-Norman culture. It's the current reflection of all those centuries, of all those people, who lived and fought for this gorgeous land. There are Byzantine mosaics walls and typical Arabic sealing and floor. I wouldn't imagine that anywhere else on Earth. It's the main idea of a traveler – how different and absolutely similar in the same time we are, how peaceful we may live near each other. We were 70 multinational incomings all over the world and we confirm it!

The doctors and residents of Paolo Giaccone hospital were patient as mentors, polite and friendly as persons and brilliant as professionals. We followed them at daily rounds, we learned how to read special neurological laboratory results, MRI scans, saw the spinal punctures, made a topical diagnosis to patients with a stroke and once even examined the patient with systemic lupus erythematosus. For me like a future neurologist, my tutor, Dr. Marco D'Amelio is a great example: his way to find that special doctor-patient connection with practically everyone is simply amazing. I wish I could do the same one day.

I'd like you to know about the story of this hospital's name. It's "Paolo Giaccone". He was the man who fought against sadly-known Sicilian mafia. He refused to cover mafia's crimes from a medical point of view as a forensic pathologist. Paolo Giaccone was murdered in front of his own department in the age of 53 years old. He has done a lot for his country and during the last 32 years Palermo's citizens (and specially medical students and doctors) celebrate Paolo Giaccone memorial day on the 11th of August. I've been there this year and it was an incredibly significant event.

I have to mention our adorable staff members. They are almost 40 people which made a perfect social program for one of the biggest exchange group in the world. And it wasn't just a duty, I noticed, that some of them enjoyed our August even more, then some of incomings. 30 days became to thousands memories. I know, that everybody will save this month in a memory till the end of his life.