

Dr Robert Wakuluk



Robert originally graduated from medical school in Poland, and after living and working in London for ten years, he arrived in NZ without a language barrier. After six years, he is currently in an Australasian College of Emergency Medicine training scheme to become an Emergency Medicine Physician consultant. On this scheme he undertakes training through hospital rotations, and must pass a number of exams.

Robert started this programme a year ago, and as the father of a young family of three children, he is currently training part-time. He says entry to NZ practice is not easy for overseas graduates; he had to do medical licensing exams (USMLE Step 1 and Step 2, and the NZREX clinical exam) and pass the NZREX registration, for which he spent a year studying at home. During that time Robert arranged for a clinical attachment at North Shore Hospital and was granted an observership, allowing him to do ward rounds and observe system practices and processes. He found that very helpful.

After he had passed the necessary exams to work in NZ, Robert was attached to a team at Waitakere Hospital which gave him exposure to the New Zealand health system; however he found this a difficult time which he did not really enjoy, as he had no preparatory training for hospital systems. During this time, he found out about the IMG programme available at Auckland Hospital which gave a full introduction to working in the NZ medical workforce. He applied for and entered this programme.

"This was the best thing that happened to me in NZ. It was really valuable."

Robert describes the programme as well – structured, providing weekly teaching on what to expect in the NZ system, and outlining different practices. Along with other IMGs, he did practice sessions in using local equipment, and filling out local forms. *"We had just been expected to know how to use equipment, operate IT systems, and fill out discharge forms."* The course also provided an understanding of cultural differences, and information about working with Maori.

"Even halfway through the programme, I knew what I was expected to do, I knew how to do it, I was ready to work in New Zealand."

Robert had initially considered tropical medicines as a specialty; however no training was available for this in New Zealand. He eventually chose Emergency Medicine, and was accepted into the programme after three years clinical experience. He has found the training excellent, noting that Emergency Medicine wasn't a specialty 10 years ago. Now the Australasian College is recognised as *"providing world class training and preparation, because of the way it is structured, the supervision, and the exposure to Consultants and clinical practice."* Robert notes in particular the *"constant access to consultants. It is most satisfying, you feel safe, and it gives great opportunities to learn. It's probably the most valuable thing."*

Robert notes that while he is on a training scheme at the age of 41, age is a barrier faced by IMG's – *"it is easier to get on any training programme if you are younger. New Zealand doctors are advantaged because they have connections, a history here; they are younger and more flexible, and they can relocate."*

He is finding it a highly satisfying experience, and is considering returning full time to training to increase his case load and exposure to patients. *"For me it has been very good. Middlemore is an amazing place to work. Every emergency department is different – a cultural experiences as well as everything else."*