

Field Report Winter School and Clinical Placement Occupational Therapy in Vitznau

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ZHAW School of Health Professions, Winterthur & Cereneo Clinic Vitznau, Switzerland

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The adventure in Switzerland



Group picture in Zurich

My adventure in Switzerland started in January 2018 with 3 weeks of Winter School in Winterthur. I followed 3 different courses, the first one was a German course 'Krise und Coping', the second one was an English course 'Study visits' and the third one was also an English course 'Professional identity and its visibility'. These 3 weeks were amazing. I have met a lot of new people from a lot of different countries (Switzerland, The Netherlands, Austria, Australia, Singapore,...).

It was nice to get to know people from other countries because we were all students of health professions and during these weeks, I discovered a lot about how they do the same profession in a very different way. The courses itself were also very interesting to follow.

After these 3 weeks in Winterthur I travelled a bit further within Switzerland: I started my internship in Vitznau, a small city near Luzern. My school in Belgium asked me to give my top 3 countries of where I would like to go for an internship and to put on the application my preferred areas of my studies. I have been a fan of physical rehabilitation from the beginning of my studies, so I put that down as one of my choices. The school started looking for a place regarding my interests and they found Cereneo clinic in Vitznau. It is a rehabilitation clinic for neurology so most



Cereneo Clinic Vitznau

of the patients that go there had a stroke or brain injury. I looked up the place on the internet and I fell in love. The clinic is in the same building as the Park hotel.

The clinic is well equipped; there are 5 different movement therapy rooms, 2 speech therapy rooms and 2 psycho neurology rooms. The clinic can intake around 16 patients in total. For me that did not seem a lot but it is actually good because you can give more attention to each patient. They also have a lot of robotics and that is something we do not have in Belgium. Here in the clinic they do not make a difference between physiotherapists and occupational therapist and I like that because both areas are of interest to me.

They use the forced use paradigm here in the clinic that is actually something I did not know before. I did not know what it was about and how it works but now I do and I want to use it in Belgium too because it is really useful and you can really see a lot of improvement. The paradigm says that you have to use your involved side together with your non-involved side. Therefore, you do exercises with for example both your hands but your non-involved hand will facilitate your involved hand to make the exercise possible.

In the beginning of the internship, I was a bit scared because my German is not great and I did not know any people there. I was the only student from Belgium there so I did not know what to expect. My parents dropped me off at the "Personalhaus", where I was staying together with staff from the clinic and hotel. I had a small room with a bed, table and chair, my own bathroom with a shower and toilet and some closets. I do not think you need more than this; it is perfect stay. Some rooms have a view over the lake and it is lovely. You can go to the cantina in the hotel to have breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The people from the clinic were so friendly; they really helped me with many things. I felt so welcome when I arrived there. They have a lot of therapists and patients from other countries (for example Spain, Germany, Brazil, Russia and more) meaning that a lot of therapies are given in English, which made it easier for me because of my bad German. And it was nice because they studied in different countries so you can really exchange a lot of information. They made me feel like I am a part of the team and that made everything easier. We were together with 3 students and it was always nice to have some students around even though the clinical team was very young and everyone was so motivated. In addition, it is probably one of the most beautiful places to work. It is right on the side of the lake so sometimes when I was working with a patient, I was able to look outside and enjoy the view.

Vitznau itself is a small village and you cannot really do many things, you can go up on the Rigi Mountain which is pretty nice to do because we do not really have mountains in Belgium. I went up with one of the other interns and it was a great day to go, because the sun was shining a lot and it almost felt like it was already summer, except for the snow. From Vitznau it is very easy to take the bus and then take the train to go visit other cities.

So to sum up my whole experience: I love Cereneo clinic and the place is wonderful. The therapists that work here really know what they are doing with the patients and it was great to learn from them. The staff is extremely friendly and very helpful. In addition, the country itself is beautiful, this was actually the first time I was in Switzerland but it will not be the last time.



Rigi Mountain with one of the other interns



Sunset by the lake after work