

2017 ICPAN Conference Scholarship Report: Sydney, Australia

By Rebecca Belton MSN RN CPAN

In April 2012, I attended my first ASPAN conference in Orlando Florida. It was also here that I heard about ICPAN for the first time. The inaugural meeting had just been held the previous year in Toronto and the idea that I would eventually be able to attend didn't even enter my mind. Fast forward to Philly and April 2016 when the location for the 2017 ICPAN was revealed as Sydney Australia. I knew then that if I was going to try and attend this was the year to do it. Of course this was before I found out that I was pregnant with my miracle baby. By God's grace and the generosity of ASPAN, I and my family were able to attend ICPAN.

Wednesday was our second day in the city and I chose to tour the Prince of Wales Hospital. It was fascinating to see how another hospital handles surgery. The PACU is quite different than in our hospital as we have a blended unit that takes all acuity of patients. The PACU there doesn't take ventilated patients and if the unit is full, the patient is recovered in the OR with the possibility of future surgeries being cancelled. It was also interesting to me to learn that Australia doesn't use CRNA's or scrub techs. Both of those positions are held by RN's in the Australian system.

Thursday, the sessions began in earnest. Hearing the Welcome to Country and the didgeridoo player was so much fun as attendees got a brief glimpse into the Aussie culture. The opening session keynote speaker Dr. Paula Foran certainly got everyone fired up by leading us in an impromptu dance session. During her presentation I was struck by the fact that although we work in different countries and areas, we are all doing the same thing. Caring for patients to the best of our ability.

After Dr. Foran came morning tea and I must say I loved this aspect. I love tea more than coffee so to be able to take a break and have some very good tea was a treat. Of course, the amazing pastries just added to the experience. After tea we had more sessions again speaking on the same topics that face us every day. One lecture that stood out was the presentation by Owen Ashwell and Harriet Zych. Seeing the conditions of "a better hospital" in Cameroon made me appreciate everything we have here in the US. Even when we are short staffed or the computer system crashes, we at least have resources to get things fixed or borrow equipment. Some places are not as fortunate. By the end of the day, I was tired but excited to see what Friday would hold.

Friday started with an interesting presentation about using videolaryngoscopy for all patients. Dr. Andre van Zundert spoke about this process which appears to be able to reduce the incidence of sore throat postoperatively. Considering how often we hear the complaint of a sore throat this could be a significant quality improvement process.

The morning concluded with a "Gathering of Nations" in a delegate forum. We divided up into groups comprised of representative from multiple nations. We were given scenarios and asked to answer a series of questions about that scenario. Each nation provided a different perspective which gave depth to the answers. This was one of my favorite parts of the conference.

Saturday morning wrapped up with closing remarks and the announcement that ICPAN 2019 will be in Cancun Mexico. Lest you think it was all lecture and no fun, Friday night had a dinner cruise through Sydney Harbour with some amazing food, great company and wonderful scenery. I enjoyed every minute of my time at ICPAN and I am thankful to ASPAN for allowing me this opportunity.