

Report- Colorado Springs 2014 – Jenni Wren

Firstly and foremostly, I cannot thank the Lisa Ullman Travel Scholarship Fund enough for funding my travel to the USA and to my hosts at Action Potential in Colorado Springs. I had made a plan and had an idea of the opportunities I could undertake but in truth, the entire trip completely exceeded all my expectations. This was a jam-packed trip of learning and inspirational experiences.

My aims and objectives were to undertake an apprenticeship with top Physical Therapists (dance focus) entering an intensive programme that has been developed specifically to further develop my understanding, expertise and practice in the area of manual therapies and dance injury medicine.

I was very much welcomed into the clinic by all the staff and their clients. The directors had opted between them to give me the most intense learning experience I couldn't even have imagined.

I spent 180 hours of internship hours practice within a clinical setting. I didn't realise the Internship was going to be so clinical and quickly found myself participating in evaluations, diagnostic sessions, design of rehab sessions and much more over a range of ages and abilities of the general public, professional runners, dancers and Olympians. Working with such highly skilled Physiotherapists, I soon realized I had a lot to learn and I was being thrown in at the deep end. I felt like I was in an episode of "House M.D." being tested and quizzed, constantly having my knowledge and answers challenged and pushed, having to justify myself every step of the way. It was a very inspirational experience, my host's knowledge was supreme with a professional, friendly and optimal approach. Soon enough I started to understand that this was no ordinary clinic, this was a clinic with some of the world's top Directors of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists, working passionately to help the general public to overcome injury and reduce pain, improve their approach to physical well-being and become the best they can be in elite international sports and dance. I gained further insights into the causes and treatments of musculoskeletal problems in the general public, athletes and dancers, as well as gaining strategies for prevention and methods of treatment. I acquired first hand knowledge and understanding of new methods and techniques available for treatment of dance injuries advancing my knowledge of the biomechanics of dance and gather up to date Information in this sector.

The experience also taught me how the medical system in the USA operates and opened my eyes to the pros and cons of such a system as well as realise how different it is to the UK.

My spare time was spent studying neurology, pathology and biomechanics of any and every injury they could throw at me. I was privileged to be invited to the weekly and weekend master classes led by the Impact team, where we were given case scenarios and physical problems to diagnose and treat. Sometimes I exceeded their expectations with my knowledge and others I felt like I had grey matter dripping from my ears.

The clinic where I was based works in a 3 fold team, 1) Reception, registration, admin and paperwork, 2) Assessments, diagnostics, treatment and rehab programmes via the Consultants 3) Rehabilitation programmes implemented via the Physical Therapy Assistants. My time was mostly spent with the Consultants, however to really understand the entire process, I also worked alongside the PTA's where I could gather info on their methods, learn new rehab exercises for clients, skill share and develop new ideas/methods. This was invaluable and again gave me a new and refreshed way of applying my knowledge upon return to the UK.

Further to my learning, I was also a client at the clinic. The Directors knew I had suffered a long term Injury and surgery with crucial compensatory elements requiring rehab within my own body. As part of my trip, they had

decided that I would not leave Colorado Springs unless I was more than fit to return to the dance world as a fully able dancer. I had many treatments during my stay, accompanied by a training and rehab programme. I have to say that this was invaluable to my body as never before can I remember it being so aligned, strong and ready to re-enter myself into the dance arena again. As you can imagine, I learned a great deal undertaking this rehab on a personal level and it contributed substantially to my experience and my future as I witnessed the improvements and changes at a profound level.

I was introduced and worked closely with the Director of the Ballet Society of Colorado where I was warmly invited to be part of the team participating in class as a dancer myself and coming into class as a specialist to assess the dancers, lecture about dance technique, biomechanics of dance, rehabilitation and treatments. I worked alongside the Society and the Directors of Action Potential to instigate treatment of dancers at the clinic and on site at the school

I had the privilege of meeting the Director of the American Distance Project and work with his top international runners. I gained a big insight into his coaching techniques and learned an abundance of knowledge about the world of running and runners.

My work with the KT element involved Pro-Taping at the World Lacrosse Championships in Denver (CO), at the San Francisco Marathon and included a trip to head offices in Utah to meet the CEO's of the company. Joe McCaleb (my host) is their top researcher and application designer and throughout this trip I was consistently being tested and given materials to study on the subject, encouraged to research and had to create a PowerPoint. After a 3 hour presentation exam, I graduated as the first official Kinesiology Therapeutic (KD Tape Instructor in Europe and can now instigate high end courses across the UK and abroad.

On my few days/evenings off, we drove around, across, up and down the state and got a glimpse of Colorado Springs beauty and wealth of activities. I even made it to see Ray La Montagne in concert at the incredible Red Rocks natural amphitheatre and get to the top of Pikes Peak which stands at over 14,000 feet. I experienced training at altitude and gained the understanding for such top athletes taking the time to go there to improve their abilities and stamina.

Colorado Springs is the top International athlete training centre for Olympians and Sports with the USA Olympic committee and training centre on my doorstep. There are many MPT's in practice. I was lucky to have been invited into an incredible experience and learning with such passionate and knowledgeable practitioners. I remain eternally grateful for being made to feel like part of their team, for the education, the generosity, the challenges, the grey matter melt downs, the banter, the hospitality and last but not least the recognition of my skills -enabling me to practice current and new techniques with skill and confidence. I have been made to feel like I am a specialist in my practice and with all the right things in place, have been offered the opportunity to return either for further CPD, to work, or both — and I intend to return. I have access to specialist mentoring to continue and in the meantime, I have returned to the UK to inject new elements into the British world of dance and injury which is really exciting.

Thank you to everyone who has helped make this happen with me, I could not have done it without such incredible support and generosity.