

## Travel letter: A Dane Visiting a Department of Dermatology in China

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**The author, Charlotte Duch Lynggaard, had a 6 month-visit at the Peking University First Hospital, China. She was fortunate to follow the work of Professor Zhu, Head of the Department of Dermatology, one day per week and gained a lot of experience which she probably not have experienced staying in Denmark.**

With a population of 1.3 billion, China is the most populous country in the world. It is a country of breathtaking nature, enormous size, and friendly, hardworking people. China has undergone a dramatic demographic, social and economic transformation over the last few decades (1).

From 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010, I had the pleasure of visiting the Department of Dermatology, Peking University First Hospital, Beijing. Lead by Professor Zhu (Fig. 1), the department is one of China's leading departments of dermatology, with 400–500 outpatients each day and 22 inpatient beds. Professor Zhu was formerly the Vice-Director of the hospital (1991–1999) and the Chairman of the Department (1998–2005). He played a vital role in developing the department to its present position. He is currently President of the China Dermatologist Association.

My time in China was a pleasant journey in both medicine and culture. I stayed in Tianjin, a city approximately 150 km east of Beijing, with my husband, who works for a Danish pharmaceutical company. During my time at Peking University First Hospital, I was fortunate to be able to visit its Department of Dermatology one day per week. At the hospital I was an observer, together with 3–5 Chinese doctors, following the work of Professor Zhu.

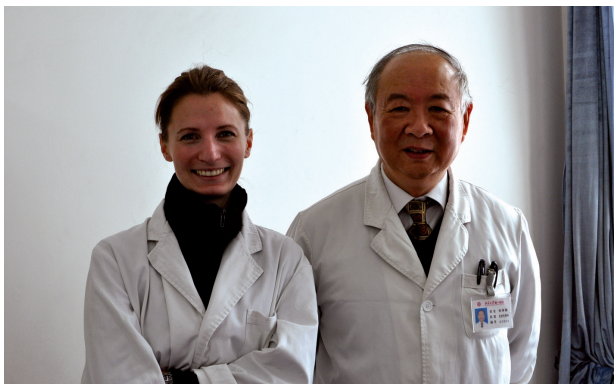


Fig. 1. Charlotte Duch Lynggaard from Denmark with Professor Zhu.

In China, doctors specializing in dermatology undergo a 3-year resident training programme, as well as 1–2 years of sub-specialty training, such as in dermatopathology.

As one of the leading dermatology departments in China, the department regularly hosts 12–15 doctors from different provinces and cities in China for training. The doctors undergoing training usually work in the department for 6 months as observers. The department has approximately 30 students, who are currently on either a 3-year Masters programme or 5-year PhD or MD training programmes. The department also runs several short-term training courses each year, in subjects such as a dermatopathology, mycology, and skin surgery.

Professor Zhu has been working in the department for more than 45 years, and is renowned for his work and research in bullous diseases. During my stay, I had the opportunity to observe many severe cases (Fig. 2), which are very rarely seen in a small country such as Denmark.

Not only the size of the population, but also the size of the country, was very impressive. Some patients travelled for several days from remote provinces and cities for a consultation with Professor Zhu. On a normal day it was common to see



Fig. 2. Professor Zhu and one of his patients who is suffering from severe pyoderma gangrenosum, successfully treated with etanercept.



Fig. 3. Left forearm of a patient being treated for bullous pemphigoid.

3–5 patients with bullous diseases (Fig. 3), and every Thursday a special clinic for patients with bullous diseases often had 20–40 cases. I especially remember one morning on which three patients with Hailey-Hailey presented before noon.

I am very grateful to Professor Zhu and his gifted colleagues for their help, hospitality and ability to translate for me. During my 6-month visit to the Department of Dermatology at Peking University First Hospital, I saw more patients with severe, rare and complicated skin diseases than most of my peers here in Denmark ever do. This experience will remain with me for a lifetime. It was an extra gift and good fortune to meet Professor Zhu, who is full of energy and passion for his work, and to observe his willingness to help fellow doctors in training. He is a gifted doctor and is loved by students, colleagues and patients. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to him once more.

### References

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