



Working in Timaru, New Zealand

Timaru is a city of 27,000 inhabitants, located on the South Island of New Zealand. Bordered by the Waitaki and Rangitata Rivers and the Southern Alps, Timaru stretches over gentle green hills signaling the southern end of the rich Canterbury plains.

Medical Care And Organization

The New Zealand Government spends 7% of its GDP on health services. The Government funds primary, secondary, and tertiary services, through the 21 Government owned District Health Boards.

Timaru Hospital is a 24-hour general hospital with 133 beds. The hospital employs 530 full time equivalent staff plus contract staff. Each year Timaru Hospital and Community Services provides the following services to the 53,000 people of South Canterbury:

- 11,000 hospital patient discharges
- 16,000 Emergency Department attendances
- 34,000 outpatient attendances
- 52,000 visits to peoples homes, workplaces or schools.



Roelf Robisch, MD, and his wife Tatjana

Personal Experience

For the past year I have been a locum physician at Timaru Hospital, specializing in gastroenterology. My work has included two clinics a week for patients with gastroenterological problems, especially diagnosis and therapy of viral hepatitis. Once a week I had a clinic to perform gastroscopies and colonoscopies.

My colleagues in Timaru were from all over the world. There were anesthesiologists from Russia and Denmark, surgeons from the Netherlands and South Africa and physicians and pediatricians from England. The nursing staff was also from all over. This gives Timaru a unique atmosphere

and it has been amazing to discuss medical problems with people from totally different health and educational systems.

The lack of specialists in New Zealand is exactly the opposite in Germany. Germans don't bother consulting their general practitioner when they feel sick, but go straight to a specialist. Over here you have to wait up to two years for an appointment with a specialist. Patients in NZ are much more grateful for everything you achieve for them and don't take it for granted.

After finishing my specialization as an internist in Germany, I wanted to do something different for a while. I found Global Medical Staffing on the internet and contacted them. Global made it very easy to take a job in New Zealand. They discussed the available openings, helped me to choose the right location and then walked me through the process of getting a medical registration and a visa. I don't know if I would have succeeded without Global's help.

My wife Tatjana and I wanted to find a place that would offer a wide variety of recreation. Timaru is right on the ocean and you can go almost everywhere on the South Island for the weekend. We've been skiing, hiking, mountain biking, fishing, jetboating.

While in New Zealand, we have also had a son. We didn't plan a pregnancy but it's been a great experience. In the beginning we were quite worried about support and medical standards, but now we wouldn't want it any other way.

The quality of life in Timaru is excellent. It is a lot less hectic than life in Germany. This whole year has been a holiday for me, even though I have been working. Everybody is more relaxed and friendlier than anywhere else in the world. There's always time for small talk wherever you go and nobody ever seems to be in a hurry.

Working in New Zealand has absolutely changed our lives. It's a great gift to have the possibility to practice medicine at the other end of the world in a totally different health system. These are relaxed and friendly people who don't need much to be happy.

Regional Statistics:

Male Life Expectancy (2005)	77.0 years
Female Life Expectancy (2005)	81.3 years
Infant Mortality (2005)	5/per 1,000 live births
Per Capita Income	US-\$19,800

www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf

New Zealand Ministry of Health, New Zealand's Health and Disability System, Publications and Resources, District Health Board etc.

www.auckland.ac.nz/

University of Auckland, Information about the University, Teaching and Learning, Research, International, Academic Programmes etc

www.southisland.org.nz

The official tourism website for the Central South Island of New Zealand.

www.gmedical.com

Global Medical Staffing pioneered international medical staffing and during the past decade have placed thousands of medical doctors and nurses into sabbaticals and permanent posts throughout New Zealand, Australia, the Caribbean and the UK.

www.goinginternational.org

The course catalogue "medicine & health" offers a comprehensive overview of training and education opportunities. 2,500 master's programs, workshops and conferences, organized by more than 700 universities and organizations world wide.

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