

Spend 10 minutes with...

g & a

DR KIM HAYES, FOUNDER OF BODY WITH SOUL HEALTHCARE AND COMPLETE HEALTHCARE INTERNATIONAL, TELLS US WHAT SHE'S LEARNED FROM PRACTICING MEDICINE IN SINGAPORE.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM ORIGINALLY?

Country Victoria and then Melbourne.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO SINGAPORE?

My boyfriend – now husband! – is Singaporean. I gave up a job with the Flying Doctors to come to Singapore to be with him. We were meant to stay here for just one year, but it's been 13 now.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE, AND WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THE AREA?

We live in Bukit Timah, which is quiet and convenient to most places that we go. Saying that, nowhere in Singapore is really that far. Funny how perspectives change so much after living here a while.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT SINGAPORE, AND WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF ADAPTING HERE?

Best? The food! And the wonderful regional travel. The challenges: definitely the heat and humidity. I think that it takes about six months to really adapt. It was also hard initially not being near family and friends.

WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRACTICING MEDICINE IN AUSTRALIA AND SINGAPORE?

When practicing as a GP here, it is great to be able to get whatever investigations or specialist opinions are needed for a patient very quickly – even on the same day if urgent. In Australia and the UK, this doesn't happen as quickly. Overall, patient care here is excellent. It is also very rewarding to be treating people who really want the best health for themselves and their families. There tends to be a high level of health awareness and interest here.

On the other hand, it's often a surprise to find how differently the local doctors prescribe medication. Although their training has been the same (either in Singapore or overseas), the local community expectation is to receive one medication for each symptom – which means that many more medications may be prescribed, even for simple illnesses. This is a common and normal practice in Singapore, which just needs to be understood and discussed.

WHAT IS YOUR TOP MEDICAL ADVICE FOR NEWCOMERS?

1) Get insurance, and read all the fine print to make sure that coverage is sufficient. 2) Get routine check-ups. Some people put these off for when they visit "back home" to then find that they are too busy and they don't get done. 3) Drink plenty of water. 4) Find a doctor who you are comfortable with. 5) Before travel, find out what vaccinations you may need and other specific health advice.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON AILMENTS OF NEWCOMERS HERE?

Dizziness, tiredness and fatigue – usually related to some degree of dehydration plus adapting to the humidity.

AS A BUSINESSWOMAN, HOW DID YOU FIND SETTING UP SHOP HERE, AND WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR EXPATS THINKING OF STARTING A BUSINESS IN SINGAPORE?

It is relatively easy to set up a business or company in Singapore. I took this unexpected step as we decided that it was best for the family to stay here. Also, there were no places where I could work where I thought that I'd be happy and engaged for many years. As anywhere, hard work is needed and staying true to your vision and principles.

WILL YOU STAY HERE A LIFETIME, OR IS THERE A FUTURE FOR YOUR FAMILY BACK IN AUSTRALIA?

Life is great here for all of us now. In the future, I see our family sharing our time between Singapore and Australia – for the best of both worlds in a later stage of our lives.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ANZA OFFERS YOU PERSONALLY?

Joining ANZA when I first arrived was a good way to meet people. I went to lots of events and on many tours. Now with children, ANZA athletics has been fantastic for my girls – whom I've found out are runners like my husband. I also plan for my son to join soccer as soon as he's old enough.



ANY SETTling-IN ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO'VE JUST ARRIVED?

Get out and about! There is so much to enjoy here – people from all over the world, amazing places to travel so close by, and really good food! Things are done differently here. It can be very rewarding to delve into local culture and see that things that may appear frustrating and difficult to understand are generally done for good (albeit different!) reasons. Part of the joy of living in a different culture for me is the broadening of the mind.