

Student Elective Report

Name	Isabel Guy
Medical School	University of Birmingham
Email (optional)	

Country visited	Singapore
City or town	Singapore
Hospital/unit/clinic	Singapore General Hospital – Plastic Surgery, Hand Surgery
Dates visited	6 th – 31 st May 2019
Supervising doctor	Professor Tan Bien Keem (Head of Plastic Surgery Department)
Contact details of your host:	Ms Ruhaya Saim (SGH Campus Education Office)

<p>Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)</p>	<p>SGH has recently been ranked the third best hospital in the world. It is the country's oldest and largest tertiary hospital, boasting a prestigious Plastic Surgery department that treats a high volume of major burns injuries, as well as maxillofacial trauma and cancer patients, frequently employing advanced microsurgical techniques.</p> <p>During the four incredible weeks I spent at SGH I attended daily teaching sessions and ward rounds that would start at 07:00, followed by theatre lists and outpatient clinics for the remainder of the day (generally until 18:00). I also spent time in some of the private clinics at SGH. Whilst initially holding an apprehensive regard towards the cosmetic sector of the specialty, this offered a fascinating insight into the cultural differences between the UK and Singapore in terms of how highly people value their appearance. As such, my supervisor referred to this part of his role as 'surgical psychiatry'.</p> <p>I was fortunate enough to be exposed to pathologies across all facets of Plastic Surgery. From lymphoedema to blepharoplasties, pectus excavatum and scar revisions, advanced flaps to facilitate both liver transplants and cancer reconstructions, I was able to see so much in such a short period of time. It was outstanding.</p>
<p>What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)</p>	<p>One key highlight of the experience was to witness the expertise of the doctors at SGH; their work ethic is infectious and their surgery highly impressive. It was a privilege to be fully immersed in the team, who were extraordinarily welcoming throughout.</p> <p>Secondly, it was fantastic to see novel techniques at the frontiers of modern plastic and reconstructive surgery, such as reverse sural flaps, lymphatico-vascular anastomoses and topical tranexamic acid for melasma. Observing the implementation of SGH's recently-upgraded</p>

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	<p>burns protocol was particularly interesting. This was a field to which I had had little prior exposure, but for which SGH is renowned, charting some of the lowest mortality rates worldwide.</p>
<p>What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)</p>	<p>Acclimatising to the perpetual humidity of Singapore posed a significant challenge, particularly whilst walking to hospital in the mornings – although leaving at 06:15 to arrive in time for the ward round usually meant the heat could be evaded.</p> <p>The administrative requirements were also frustrating and expensive: completing the necessary paperwork as part of the application, organizing and collecting a Work Holiday Pass and paying the hospital's elective fees. Fortunately, I had researched these technicalities thoroughly in advance so was able to organize the logistics appropriately. Lastly, whilst long working days may be considered a drawback, they were intensely rewarding.</p>
<p>What accommodation was provided?</p>	<p>No accommodation was available through SGH, so I rented an excellent apartment close to Orchard Road and Fort Canning, just a 40-minute walk from the hospital. It was an ideal place to relax after a demanding day at the hospital.</p>
<p>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</p>	<p>I cannot recommend this elective placement enough. SGH has provided an extensive exposure to a vast spectrum of pathologies pertaining to a completely different culture of healthcare compared to the UK. The huge demand of work within the department is ideal for any student with an interest in Plastics to gain an appreciation for what the specialty involves.</p> <p>Time in hospital aside, Singapore is a brilliant country with a wealth of things to explore, from the lush green rainforests to the bustling city, the colourful suburbs and the stretching beaches. The people are so friendly and rightly proud – it's been a privilege to have had such an adventure.</p>
<p>Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?</p>	<p>This elective has resolutely confirmed to me that Plastics is what makes me tick. The core components of the specialty – skin, hands and burns – grant the privilege to work on all parts of the body, making plastic surgeons some of the last remaining 'general surgeons'. The scope of work undertaken has certainly galvanised my interest.</p> <p>In the words of Professor BK Tan, plastic surgery is all about striving to do "minimal for maximal": getting the best patient outcome through the least invasive techniques. It poses a captivating task for the surgeon, who is required to work out novel ways of reconstructing the anatomy, physiology and appearance of defects and deformities. This challenge is what fascinates me about Plastics and my invaluable experience in Singapore, whilst exhausting at times, has certainly acted as a catalyst for me to further pursue my ambitions in this field.</p>