



BAPRAS

British Association of Plastic
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

Student Elective Report

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Please return to: secretariat@bapras.org.uk

Please complete this report form as honestly as possible so that others considering an elective may benefit from your experience. If you visited more than one place, please complete separate forms for each. Please bear in mind that we will be posting this report on our website for others to read.

Student Elective Report

Name	Rebecca Jurdon
Medical School	University of Oxford
Email (optional)	

Country visited	Malawi
City or town	Blantyre
Hospital/unit/clinic	Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Surgery Unit
Dates visited	20 th March – 22 nd April 2022
Supervising doctor	Mr Patrick Noah – Head of The Surgery Unit
Contact details of your host:	

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>As one of four tertiary centres in Malawi, and the only medical school, there were plenty of interesting cases and excellent teaching. My time with the plastics surgery team was spent across the burns unit, paediatric and adult surgical wards.</p> <p>In the burns unit, which comprised an HDU, wards, operating theatre and clinics, the majority of patients were under-5s with severe burns due to accidents involving cooking on open fires. Most had received little first aid or traditional remedies including placing egg onto burns. The mainstay of treatment was conservative management, with physiotherapy used to prevent contractures. Skin graft use was limited to poorly progressing wounds. Ward rounds were particularly distressing as dressings would be removed without sedation due to a shortage of anaesthetic staff.</p> <p>I observed and assisted in a range of paediatric and adult plastic surgery from cleft palate repair to trauma, including finger tendon repair using WALANT. Other cases included late-stage tumours including a large SCC with skull invasion and a destructive ameloblastoma in the lower jaw. Management was often complicated by the high prevalence of malnutrition and malaria contributing to poor wound healing.</p>
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<p>What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)</p>	<p>The small team of plastic surgeons were busy with complex and varied cases. The team were exceptionally welcoming as were the Malawian medical students we joined. I enjoyed the many beautiful places to visit near Blantyre and on Lake Malawi.</p> <p>The surgical department had a strong academic focus. For example, the morning handover involved all surgical teams presenting and discussing admissions and scrutinising the care they had received. Frequent journal clubs and morbidity and mortality meetings were held and involved thorough discussion, including of the application of research to the resource-limited settings the surgeons worked in.</p>
<p>What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)</p>	<p>Although teaching and conversations between healthcare professionals were conducted in English, most patients spoke only Chichewa with limited English. However, we were able to work alongside medical students who could translate as we clerked patients together.</p> <p>85% of Malawians live in rural settings and are limited in their access to hospital care; patients often presented very late and unwell as a result. There was often little that the surgeons could do for patients due to their late presentation or the prevailing resource limitations. I often found the morbidity and mortality from what would be considered preventable causes in the UK overwhelming and upsetting.</p>
<p>What accommodation was provided?</p>	<p>The hospital is unable to provide accommodation but there are many affordable options nearby. I would recommend Chinyonga Guest House and Kabula Lodge.</p>
<p>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</p>	<p>Yes, absolutely - there is the opportunity to see a wide spectrum of pathologies and to access teaching from excellent surgeons. Malawi is a beautiful and friendly country to visit and the elective placements at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital are well organised.</p>

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Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	Yes, this placement gave me greater insight into the spectrum of disease amenable to treatment by plastic surgery globally. The cases I saw highlighted the role and skill of the plastic surgeon in returning function and improving quality of life. I was able to develop my surgical skills and found that the aspects of surgery and medicine I enjoy largely lie within plastic surgery.
Which University are you studying at?	University of Oxford