



BAPRAS

British Association of Plastic
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

Student Elective Report

Student Elective Report

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	Zoha Imam
Medical School	Imperial College London
Email (optional)	

Country visited	Singapore
City or town	Singapore
Hospital/unit/clinic	Singapore General Hospital
Dates visited	15/12/21 – 29/12/21
Supervising doctor	Professor Chew Khong Yik – Lead Consultant in Department of Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery Professor Tan Bien Keem – Acting Head of Department of Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery
Contact details of your host:	

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic caused reverberations in all aspects of healthcare delivery, as well as regulations for medical electives. Once the border of Singapore opened with apprehensive permanence to the outside world, I was able to travel to Singapore General Hospital (SGH)</p> <p>Singapore provides universal healthcare for all its citizens and permanent residents. It does not have a welfare system regarding healthcare, but it provides basic healthcare insurance based on a non-resident's tax contribution. SGH is a government hospital; it is the oldest in Singapore and it has the largest burns unit in South-East Asia.</p> <p>Whilst private hospitals may be more exclusive and more comfortable, the more specialised equipment is often found in government hospitals – much like in the NHS. I wasn't able to visit a private hospital but I shadowed the surgical theatres and plastics clinic where I saw a great variety of cases. These cases involved major burns, gender reassignment, breast cancer reconstruction and hand surgery.</p> <p>Given the COVID-19 restrictions, I was not able to assist in surgery but the surgeons and nurses very kindly allowed me to scrub in to get a better view of procedures.</p>
What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)	My supervisors, Prof Chew and Prof Tan, are experts in their field and teachers by nature. I felt so incredibly welcome when I arrived at the hospital and their mentorship is something I will value for the rest of my life. Not only did they allow to shadow clinic and theatre, they

Student Elective Report

	<p>introduced me to their multidisciplinary team, allowed me to read their pending publications and showed me around all the plastic surgery-related places in the hospital.</p> <p>I was surprised by the parallels between the Singapore healthcare system compared to the NHS – it felt very familiar in a not-so-familiar land. The means-tested healthcare system allows patients from all socio-economic backgrounds to access safe and adequate healthcare regardless of wealth.</p>
What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)	<p>Since most people in Singapore speak English, I seldom felt the language barrier. A few of the more elderly patients only spoke Mandarin or other local dialects (e.g. Hokkien) however the surgical ward round team, consisting of the consultant and his junior doctors, would translate to me.</p>
What accommodation was provided?	<p>Given that there are a few universities linked to Singapore General Hospital, I suspect there may be university accommodation available. I stayed in private accommodation; AirBnBs are also available.</p> <p>The MRT (London's underground equivalent) is air-conditioned, punctual and excellently organised; the commute was very easy. For those who are familiar with London's transport service, I would compare the MRT to the Elizabeth Line in terms of its comfort and appearance.</p>
Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)	<p>Absolutely. Singapore General Hospital is a testament to Singapore's healthcare system; it is world-leading in plastic surgery and has the biggest burns centre in South-East Asia – as well as being a tertiary referral centre for numerous other specialties. It is also fair and robust in ensuring that all citizens receive excellent care, something I am passionate about.</p> <p>Again, I cannot thank my supervisors enough for their hospitality and eagerness to teach and I would recommend this elective to every aspiring plastic surgeon.</p>
Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	<p>Definitely. If I have ever waived in my passion in plastic surgery, any doubt dissipated once I began my elective in Singapore. It was familiar and yet, exciting and new. It was humbling yet inspiring. I would love to return to Singapore as a surgeon during my training and learn more from the department.</p>