



**BAPRAS**

British Association of Plastic  
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

# **Student Elective Report**

Please return to: [secretariat@bapras.org.uk](mailto: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

<b>Name</b>	Alex Barrow
<b>Medical School</b>	Cardiff University
<b>Email (optional)</b>	

<b>Country visited</b>	India
<b>City or town</b>	Coimbatore
<b>Hospital/unit/clinic</b>	Ganga hospital
<b>Dates visited</b>	20/02/23 – 16/03/23
<b>Supervising doctor</b>	Dr Raja Sabapathy
<b>Contact details of your host:</b>	

<b>Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)</b>	<p>Ganga hospital is a private tertiary centre renowned as a leading site for orthoplastic reconstructive surgery, particularly hand surgery.</p> <p>During my time, I attended alternating clinics and theatres. The former gave insight into a plethora of pathology at different stages of intervention. The latter demonstrated a remarkable mixture of emergency and elective cases - predominantly for plastic, orthopaedic and maxillary-facial surgical teams.</p> <p>I observed over 50 operations ranging in length from 20 minutes to 7 hours. Memorable surgeries included a toe to thumb transfer and an opponensplasty for an exceedingly rare case of dorsal dimelia. However, there was ample opportunity to be involved with defining plastic surgery operations. These included cleft lip repairs, burns management, microsurgery, more free flaps than I was even aware of, and reconstruction of rare congenital pathology such as cleft hand or foot.</p> <p>Ganga evidently holds the education of its trainees as a core value. Every morning there was either a series of case discussions or a presentation covering anything from eyebrow reconstruction to recreating a mandible from a fibula flap in a devastating case of oral cancer. As a result, the practical aspect of my elective was thoroughly backed by theory.</p>
<b>What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)</b>	<p>The fact that patients travelled from all over India (and some even internationally) speaks volumes about how fantastic an opportunity this placement was to expose myself to a wide range of intriguing cases.</p>

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	<p>Furthermore, the sustainable approach Ganga takes to reducing surgical waste and financial cost to the patient was thought-provoking.</p> <p>Meeting the surgical team and fellows from all over the world, all with a wealth of specialised knowledge they were happy to share, was everything I hoped from this elective.</p> <p>Outside of surgery, there were plenty of places worth exploring, from local temples to verdant Kerala. South India is steeped in beautifully preserved culture and architecture; the cuisine was everything I hoped for too!</p>
<b>What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)</b>	<p>Language is often a barrier to medical electives abroad. I am grateful that, largely, this wasn't the case. Impressively, all the surgeons spoke excellent English, as cases and teaching were always given in English.</p> <p>Clinics were usually in Tamil or other Dravidian languages, which presented more of a challenge. However, it was certainly good for my observational skills, as much about the pathology and previous interventions could be gleaned by carefully assessing clinical signs, examination findings, and radiology.</p> <p>Being supernumerary in theatre (usually alongside trainees at more advanced levels of surgical experience), there were no opportunities to scrub in and assist. With theatres so full, it could occasionally be difficult to see what was happening.</p>
<b>What accommodation was provided?</b>	<p>The usual accommodation was fully booked with fellowship surgeons, so I was placed in a nearby hotel, which was excellent and a 2-minute walk from the hospital.</p>
<b>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</b>	<p>Yes, it was an excellent opportunity to experience world-class reconstructive surgery, as well as a rich and interesting culture. I would recommend learning a little Tamil for students or doctors considering going, as even a small amount is appreciated.</p>
<b>Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?</b>	<p>Absolutely.</p>