



BAPRAS

British Association of Plastic
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

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

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| Name | Gayatri Tadikamalla |
| Medical School | University of Oxford |
| Email (optional) | |

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| Country visited | Malaysia |
| City or town | Kuching |
| Hospital/unit/clinic | Sarawak General Hospital |
| Dates visited | 01/06/2023 – 23/06/2023 |
| Supervising doctor | Mr Chai Koh Song |
| Contact details of your host: | |

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| Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max) | <p>During my time I attended ward-rounds, clinics, assisted with and observed minor operations and major cases. The hospital is a tertiary centre, the biggest in the state of Sarawak, and has an emergency department and multiple specialty wards. The hospital itself resembles those in the UK, with some older buildings and facilities and some more modern. The cases I encountered somewhat differed to those commonly seen in Oxford. Road traffic accidents, and thus resulting trauma, are more common, as are burn cases, and cases of skin cancer to a degree of severity that is rare to see in the UK. The cases involving extensive reconstruction were particularly interesting; theatre lists were typically very long, and I learned a lot from observing the complex post-op management of patients' skin flaps.</p> <p>Solutions to resource scarcity medical teams had e.g. a 'homemade' negative pressure dressing costing a fraction of those seen in the UK were also interesting to see. English is widely spoken - patient notes etc are written in English and the doctors were happy to translate consultations, making it easy for me to follow cases. I also spent a weekend with a volunteer clinic, travelling to the Borneo highlands.</p> |
| What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max) | <p>The surgical team were incredibly friendly, keen to explain things and involve me; all the medical professionals I encountered had a pleasant attitude towards their work and their colleagues, making attending placement a pleasure. I enjoyed building on experiences of plastic surgery I have had on placement in the UK by seeing a variety of pathology, some of which was new to me (outside of a textbook). Additionally, the culture of Sarawak is something I feel grateful to have experienced as it's incredibly rich, and distinct from anything I have</p> |

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| | previously encountered. There was also lots to do in the area, such as hiking, snorkelling, seeing wildlife, which I enjoyed. I would also highly recommend travelling with the rural clinic. |
| What problems did you encounter? (120 words max) | <p>When I arrived, there was some administrative confusion with my placement, but we were able to sort this out and the placement ran smoothly thereafter.</p> <p>Kuching is not pedestrian or bicycle friendly, and there's little to no public transport, but this was not a huge problem as e-hailing services (Grab, Maxim) can be used to get around the city. Renting a motorbike would also be an affordable option.</p> |
| What accommodation was provided? | Hospital accommodation was not available, but I managed to rent a studio apartment at Kozi Square which is ideally located as it's around a five-minute walk away from the hospital. |
| Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary) | <p>Yes definitely. I feel like I got a lot out of the placement, really enjoyed the working environment, managed to see a variety of complex cases (including those involving ENT, maxfax, ortho) and assist in theatre.</p> <p>I should say that the level of involvement and responsibility medical students have in Malaysia seems similar to the UK, so a placement in South Africa for example, or with a charity in Cambodia or Vietnam might be better for someone who is specifically looking to improve their procedural skills.</p> |
| Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience? | Yes! I feel lucky to have had plastic surgery placements in the UK. My experience in Kuching has reinforced my interest and helped show me what's possible within the specialty. |