



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

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|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Name | Lucy Coull |
| Medical School | University of Southampton |
| Email (optional) | |

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| Country visited | South Africa |
| City or town | Cape Town |
| Hospital/unit/clinic | Groote Schuur Hospital, Division of Plastic, Reconstructive and Maxillo-facial Surgery |
| Dates visited | 08/05 – 02/06/2023 |
| Supervising doctor | Dr Gertruida van Niekerk |
| Contact details of your host: | |

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| Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max) | <p>Groote Schuur is a busy hospital and there is always something happening within the plastics department. Departmental teaching takes place at 7am on Tuesday mornings followed by the grand round. I attended outpatient clinics on Wednesdays and opted to spend the rest of my week in theatres.</p> <p>Some of the most memorable cases I assisted in included a radial artery free flap to the lower limb following a traumatic injury, a pedicled forehead flap for reconstruction of the nose, and a gracilis muscle flap following excision of penile cancer and perineal urethrostomy.</p> <p>There are high numbers of skin cancer cases across different patient demographics, including skin cancers in those with Fitzpatrick type 1 skin due to sun exposure and squamous cell carcinomas in those living with HIV (>20% of the patient population). I was able to see two cases of acral melanoma and a few cases of very large fungating tumours that would be rare to see in the UK.</p> <p>It was also easy to arrange a visit to the Red Cross Children's Hospital to attend the paediatric burns list which, on the day I attended, consisted of debridement and skin grafts on large burns of the arms, chest and abdomen.</p> |
| What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max) | <p>There are multiple lists running simultaneously and therefore multiple opportunities to first assist. On one occasion I was grabbing a coffee outside the hospital when a registrar called to kindly ask for my assistance in theatre – it was a positive experience to feel useful and part of the team.</p> |

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| | Twice a week there is a local anaesthetic skin list run by a registrar; the most common procedures on this list include the excision of various lesions, full thickness and split thickness skin grafts. These lists provided a great opportunity for me to practice my surgical skills; I learnt how to excise lesions, take skin grafts, inject local anaesthetic and practice deep dermal, simple interrupted and subcuticular sutures. |
| What problems did you encounter? (120 words max) | Groote Schuur is a very large teaching hospital comprised of a 'new' and an 'old' building containing multiple entrances, exits and stairwells all which lend themselves to medical students getting lost. I probably spent a couple of hours looking quite lost and searching for theatres or clinics in the first week, an experience that was shared by other international elective students I met at the hospital. Thankfully, over time, navigating the hospital becomes easier. |
| What accommodation was provided? | None. There are many options for Airbnbs all over Cape Town including in Observatory near the hospital. |
| Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary) | Yes! There are ample opportunities to get involved with interesting cases and practice your surgical skills. Cape Town is beautiful and there is no shortage of things to do after placement. |
| Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience? | Yes. I found the team to be welcoming and full of many different characters (in a positive sense), the cases to be interesting and I felt engaged and keen to assist with the operations in theatre. Choosing a specialty is of course a difficult decision however, this placement has given me further confirmation that a career in plastics is both challenging and rewarding. |