



BAPRAS

British Association of Plastic
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

Student Elective Report

Name	Abigail Shaw
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Country visited	South Africa
City or town	Cape Town
Hospital/unit/clinic	Trauma Unit, Groote Schuur Hospital
Dates visited	4 th April to 27 th May 2016
Supervising doctor	Professor Andrew Nichol, Head of the Trauma Centre
Contact details of your host:	Jade Rolfe, Elective Officer (jade.rolfe@uct.ac.za) Unfortunately, the University of Cape Town is suspending international electives after 2017 due to complaints from local UCT students that they are not getting enough clinical time due to the number of international students.

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>Groote Schuur is a government tertiary referral hospital near the centre of Cape Town. The unit mostly receives referrals from the day hospitals in the townships, which have a high rate of violence associated with gangs, poverty and substance abuse. Most of the cases are stabbings, gunshots, community assaults and road traffic accidents.</p> <p>I worked 3 or 4 shifts per week, starting at either 8am or 6pm with a ward round, assisting the doctors with clerking, ordering tests, referrals and bloods. I also acquired new skills in suturing, wound care and plastering a wide variety of injuries. There was always an opportunity to go to theatre with the 'cutting registrar' as during the night they did not have an assistant unless a student was available.</p> <p>Whilst I was there, a study was being set up on patient flow through the trauma unit with the aim of looking at barriers to patients leaving the resuscitation area. In the UK, all patients should be seen in A&E and treated, admitted or discharged within 4 hours. However, in the trauma unit at Groote Schuur Hospital,</p>
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	<p>patients often stay for several days in resus waiting for theatre, a bed or specialist investigations.</p> <p>The research plan was to identify all patients admitted to the resuscitation area over a 3 month period (around 300), looking at the time they were admitted, any referrals or investigations and the time they were discharged, moved down to yellow area or admitted to a ward. I was able to help with the research proposal, attend the ethics meeting at the hospital and collect the first 3 weeks data. In these 3 weeks, we collected data on 86 patients.</p>
<p>What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to learn new skills – how to assess a trauma patient, suturing, wound care, chest drains • Theatre experience - I was able to assist with an emergency laparotomy for a gunshot wound abdomen, sternotomy for a stab wound to the heart, reversal of a thoracotomy and brachial artery repair among others • Being taught by trauma surgeons from around the world who were training in the unit • Community of students in the trauma unit – other students doing clinical and research placements from Europe and Canada • Cape Town as a city – amazing hiking, beaches, food, wine and sights!
<p>What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security and crime – in general we had few problems but you have to be sensible ie not walking around the city at night, getting ‘ubers’ and avoiding public transport. I had my car broken into during the night outside our accommodation • Scrubs – they are always huge in the hospital, so may be better to take your own set with you! • Difficulty finding the right equipment in the department – often stocks ran out during the shift or were never in the same place twice, so you had to hunt for them which often wasted a lot of time
<p>What accommodation was provided?</p>	<p>No accommodation was available at Groote Schuur. I rented an apartment through ‘Airbnb’ in Oranjezicht with two other elective students from my university.</p>
<p>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</p>	<p>Absolutely, definitely the best two months of medical school. Opportunity to have a lot of experience in a short time with teaching from fantastic doctors.</p>

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Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	Yes – I really enjoyed the opportunity to learn different suturing techniques and about wound care. Being in surgery was definitely the most enjoyable part, which strengthened my desire to pursue a career in plastic surgery.
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