

Student Elective Report

Name	Alex North
Medical School	University of Dundee
Email (optional)	

Country visited	South Africa
City or town	Johannesburg
Hospital/unit/clinic	Trauma & Plastics – Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital
Dates visited	23 rd October – 1 st December 2017
Supervising doctor	Dr Moeng & Dr Ndobe
Contact details of your host:	University of Witswatersrand Elective Officer:

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	The Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) is one of the government hospitals in Johannesburg, providing care from most specialties and includes a level 1 trauma centre. In the trauma unit I was able to assist the team in multiple resuscitations, improving my competence in providing emergency care. I was frequently able to clerk patients, assessing their injuries and formulating appropriate management plans. There was ample opportunity to improve my practical skills, especially wound closure, which I performed on most days of my placement. My time in plastics complemented the time in trauma well, as here I was able to assist the team in dealing with the more complex injuries, mainly tendon or nerve injuries to the hands or arms resulting from knife wounds. Furthermore, due to the more limited access to healthcare and the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, I was involved in the care of more exaggerated pathologies - including advanced squamous cell carcinomas of the face. My involvement in planning treatment and opportunity to assist in theatres for these complex cases will provide invaluable experience for assessing and treating future patients.
What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ample opportunities to improve my practical skills such as suturing and wound closure - Plentiful time spent assisting in theatre and improving my knowledge of surgical procedures - Improving my ability to clinically assess hand injuries, determining which structures are affected and formulating appropriate management plans.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Exposure to the work-up and considerations of managing advanced cancers, ensuring clearance and a cosmetically acceptable result.
What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)	The healthcare system in South Africa is underfunded and understaffed. As a result, some investigations and management plans available in the UK were not. Whilst this can be beneficial in promoting good clinical skills, it can also be frustrating. Furthermore, often staff rely on the presence of students and working hours can be long.
What accommodation was provided?	Many of the doctors offer rooms to rent for elective students in conjunction with the university, who will provide contact details upon acceptance for the clerkship. Alternatively, it is possible to rent a room in the university halls of residence (wits junction) which is a five-minute walk from the hospital.
Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)	Yes – the experience I gained during this placement was the best of my time as an undergraduate and will stand me in good stead for my future career.
Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	Yes