

Student Elective Report

Name	Alice Mortimer
Medical School	Manchester
Email (optional)	

Country visited	Cambodia
City or town	Phnom Penh
Hospital/unit/clinic	The Children's Surgical Centre
Dates visited	27 th March – 19 th May
Supervising doctor	Dr Gollogly
Contact details of your host:	info@csc.org

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	The Children's Surgical Centre is a non-government funded hospital in Phnom Penh that specialises in surgical treatment for poor disabled Cambodians. The hospital specialises in orthopaedic, plastic, ENT and ophthalmic surgery. I spent most of my time in theatre assisting in plastic and orthopaedic operations, where I was able to be actively involved in the procedures. I also took part in clinic consultations and ward rounds each day. The pathology that I encountered was very different to that in the UK, with many patients having chronic injuries that had been left untreated and thus presented a clinical and surgical challenge. Of note I was involved in surgery for complex brachial nerve injuries, tendon transfers and severe burns. Whilst at the hospital I was also involved in a project to improve ward documentation and completed a study into patient outcomes following open reduction surgery for chronic elbow dislocations. During my elective I was able to gain an understanding of the challenges of working in a developing country as well as my knowledge of unfamiliar pathologies and technical surgical skills.
What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)	The best thing about my visit was being able to get actively involved in surgery on a daily basis and also to see many procedures and conditions that I had not encountered before. During my time at the hospital a group of very experienced hand and peripheral nerve surgeons visited and this particular week was especially worthwhile. I was involved in very complex procedures for brachial plexus injuries, syndactyly, tendon transfers and many types of myocutaneous flaps for tissue deficits. I am hoping to pursue a career in plastic surgery so this was particularly worthwhile for me. I also felt very privileged to be able to visit Cambodia as a country and meet some fantastic, inspiring and

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	extremely humble people.
What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)	The main problem I encountered was the language barrier between myself and the patients. Most of the doctors and other healthcare professionals spoke English but I found it frustrating at times that I was unable to communicate with the patients themselves. During the time I visited Cambodia was also the hottest season of the year, which was very difficult to work in, especially when scrubbed up for theatre!
What accommodation was provided?	I stayed in a flat above a biomedical engineering company that serves the hospital. This can be arranged through the hospital and rent is in the region of \$350 per month. Other medical students in Phnom Penh stayed in private rentals or there are many hostels/guesthouses that can accommodate long stays but are further away from the hospital.
Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)	Yes, this is a fantastic elective if you would like to get hands on experience and are quite sure that you want to become a surgeon. There is also plenty of opportunity to undertake research/audit projects.
Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	I was quite sure before embarking on my elective that I would choose a career in plastic surgery, and this was my rationale for choosing this particular elective. However, the experience that I had has definitely solidified this plan and made me even more determined to become a plastic surgeon.