

I arranged my elective at the Children's Surgical Centre (CSC) in the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. CSC is an NGO charitable hospital providing rehabilitation surgery free of charge to a severely underprivileged patient population. The hospital was initially set up two decades ago to treat the disabled victims of war and landmine injuries in a country recovering from civil unrest. CSC today operates as part of the Kien Khleang National Rehabilitation Centre and has since expanded its operations and expertise significantly specialising in delivering orthopaedic, plastic and reconstructive, neurosurgical, ENT, ophthalmic and maxillofacial care to people of all ages from poor backgrounds.

There are several reasons why I chose CSC as my elective destination of choice. To begin with, CSC is renowned for the immense experiential learning it offers, attracting international surgeons from diverse fields across the world who want to learn and see pathology different to that in their home country. Visiting international surgeons and teams give back by sharing their expertise with local surgeons and healthcare staff to in turn help develop a sustainable surgical centre for the community. With its altruistic underpinnings and model of NGO-delivered healthcare, I hoped to determine and consolidate my own interest/vision of surgical work in a developing nation. CSC also provided a unique opportunity to see surgeons use their ingenuity to provide free, complex, surgical services in a resource-constrained setting with only \$140 spent per surgery. Of course, being surgically-inclined, I wanted to maximise hands-on experience in theatre particularly in orthopaedics and plastics both of which comprise the bulk of patient workload. In addition, CSC would allow me to gain exposure to various other specialities including neurosurgery, ENT, maxillofacial and ophthalmic surgery that often work in synergy to restore form and function to patients. Together, these reasons in my mind made CSC a uniquely challenging yet rewarding elective destination to grow in my knowledge, abilities and skills. It is now, looking back, I can confidently say that the elective very much met these expectations and even exceeded them in some aspects.

On a day-to-day basis, I scrubbed into surgery as an active member of the team, saw pre-op and post-op workup of patients and attended consultations in clinics. A key focus at CSC is training and education of local surgeons which I contributed to by delivering oral presentations and generating posters. The people I encountered were extremely hospitable and welcoming and very much made the experience as incredible as it was. I would most definitely recommend this elective to anyone who knows they want to pursue a career in or are keen on the idea of surgery. The elective is very hands on, with lots of opportunities to get involved in theatre, clerk patients and partake in teaching.

By exploring the differences between healthcare provision at CSC compared to the NHS, I left for elective in the hope of ultimately shifting my 'healthcare paradigm'. It is without a doubt I have returned having gained new perspectives on how medical/surgical challenges may be approached, having broadened my understanding, and having emerged as a more informed individual and for it, a better doctor and perhaps one day surgeon.