

## Student Elective Report

<b>Name</b>	Katherine Wensley
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<b>Country visited</b>	Vietnam
<b>City or town</b>	Ho Chi Minh City
<b>Hospital/unit/clinic</b>	Cho Ray Hospital
<b>Dates visited</b>	February – March 2017
<b>Supervising doctor</b>	Dr. Ngô Đức Hiệp
<b>Contact details of your host:</b>	<a href="mailto:training.crtcd@gmail.com">training.crtcd@gmail.com</a>

<b>Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)</b>	<p>Patient injuries were severe and wide-ranging, but burns were the mainstay, including acute presentations of third-degree burns, burns up to 80% BSA or later with severe contractures secondary to previous burns.</p> <p>I assisted with a range of procedures not frequently performed in the UK, including live donor skin grafts – since cadaveric or synthetic alternatives were not available – and unusual pedicled flaps.</p> <p>The department was overstretched and under resourced. Surgical equipment was basic, old and often not functioning correctly. Infection rates were high, around 70% and I was troubled by sometimes inadequate theatre sterility. For the first few days these conditions were somewhat overwhelming and I felt my knowledge insufficient to make a real difference to the department. However, I realised that even simple interventions might be beneficial so gave picture-based presentations advocating hand-washing and sterility within the department.</p> <p>I learnt to classify burns, debride them, identify areas suitable and unsuitable for receiving grafts, harvest split-thickness skin grafts myself using a humby knife, hand mesh and apply these STSGs. I was able to assist with every procedure and by the end I was not infrequently left to operate alone on simpler cases.</p>
<b>What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)</b>	<p>This was an incredibly ‘hands-on’ placement, limited, almost exclusively, to theatre time. This was a highlight; my practical skills and confidence improved immensely, mostly my tissue handling skills.</p>

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	<p>Surgeons were always willing to teach - in spite of the language barrier – and were also keen to practice English whenever possible. Favourite words included 'fasciotomy' and 'tape'.</p> <p>I felt privileged to gain exposure to injuries I might never see in the UK, in terms of mechanism and severity of the injury as well as the secondary outcomes.</p>
<b>What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)</b>	The main issue was the language barrier as very little English (or French) is spoken. If you are willing to learn to work around this, the department are also willing to do their best to communicate, so it need not be a barrier to a very worthwhile placement.
<b>What accommodation was provided?</b>	No
<b>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</b>	Absolutely
<b>Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?</b>	Yes