

Student Elective Report

Name	Prem Dinesh Chouhan
Medical School	Imperial College London
Email (optional)	

Country visited	Australia
City or town	Brisbane
Hospital/unit/clinic	Princess Alexandra Hospital, University of Queensland
Dates visited	12/04/2017 to 28/05/2017
Supervising doctor	Mr Michael Wagels
Contact details of your host:	

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>During my elective my time was mostly spent in theatre, though I also attended morning ward rounds, clinics, and teaching for Residents and Interns.</p> <p>As the Princess Alexandra Hospital is a major tertiary centre, I scrubbed-in to assist with numerous trauma cases and multidisciplinary cases in tandem with different surgical teams (e.g. ENT, orthopaedics, neurosurgery and general surgery), as well as numerous skin cancer cases including basal cell carcinomas, squamous cell carcinomas, malignant melanomas and Bowen's disease, with differing degrees of severity requiring interventions as simple as excisions of the lesion with direct closure or as complex as an orbital exenteration and free flap reconstruction. A plethora of techniques from the reconstructive toolbox were observed including direct tissue closure, split- and full-thickness skin grafts, as well as local, regional and free tissue transfer. Free flaps observed included anterolateral thigh flaps, pectoralis major myocutaneous flaps, transverse rectus abdominis myocutaneous flaps, deep inferior epigastric perforator flaps, thoracodorsal artery perforator flaps, and inferior gluteal artery perforator flaps.</p> <p>Clinical experience included taking histories and examining patients</p>
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	independently prior to presenting cases and formulating management plans with senior members of staff in clinic, as well as observing during daily ward rounds.
What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)	<p>Practical experience was excellent as I was allowed to scrub for almost every case I attended in theatre, and was often primary assistant for less complex cases. I was allowed to place deep dermal and subcuticular sutures, place drain stitches, insert staples, harvest split-thickness skin grafts with an air dermatome, apply dressings, and even assist with microsurgery. I also had the opportunity to join other surgical teams in theatre to experience other surgical specialties.</p> <p>The plastic and reconstructive surgery team provided an incredibly supportive and professional training environment. They welcomed me as one of their own, helping me integrate into the team and providing me with an appropriate level of responsibility to ensure I was able to contribute meaningfully.</p>
What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)	<p>The University of Queensland do not issue computer accounts for elective students, making it initially difficult to access electronic patient records and write in the notes during clinics as local students do. Nonetheless, this was overcome as the Residents were allowed to let me use their logins.</p> <p>Early starts and late finishes also limited opportunities to read around cases and consolidate knowledge.</p>
What accommodation was provided?	None. I organised my own accommodation online through Airbnb.
Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)	Definitely, as I absolutely loved my time at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and the clinical training was of the highest calibre. The warm Australian climate, the awe-inspiring travel opportunities, Brisbane's atmospheric cityscape, the friendly staff, the welcoming work environment and the excellent practical and clinical experience all contributed to an incredibly enjoyable elective.
Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	This elective has re-defined my career ambitions and made me seriously want to pursue a career in plastic and reconstructive surgery. Having previously had little exposure to this specialty, I found the variety of the caseload, the ingenuity of the procedures, and the sheer breadth of knowledge required to be truly captivating.