

Student Elective Report

Name	Benjamin Patel
Medical School	Oxford
Email (optional)	

Country visited	South Africa and Hawaii
City or town	Cape Town and Honolulu
Hospital/unit/clinic	Groote Schuur and Queen's
Dates visited	05/02/18 – 13/04/18
Supervising doctor	Daniel Alam
Contact details of your host:	

Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>Cape Town: Road trauma, assault cases and congenital reconstruction. I balanced time between the trauma centre and plastics theatres. Most of my shifts were at night, where I was expected to clerk patients, suture lacerations, reduce fractures and help out in theatre.</p> <p>Honolulu: I was the sole assistant in theatre to Dr. Daniel Alam, who undertook the microvascular work for the first face transplant in the US. We operated 4 days per week, undertaking major free flap reconstruction for 2 of the days. I helped out on radial forearm, ALT and fibular flaps and was expected to close the donor sites myself, using skin grafts where necessary. The other 2 days were smaller cases (parotidectomy, mohs closures, oculoplastics, maxillectomy, orbital decompressions). Dr. Alam taught me during every minute of each procedure and expected me to suggest the most appropriate ways of closing all of the smaller cases. We also wrote up an analysis of limb salvage cases for publication.</p>
What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)	<p>Cape Town: the responsibility to work as a doctor as part of their team, seeing and managing patients myself with very little input from seniors. This was challenging but extremely rewarding.</p> <p>Honolulu: the free flap cases were incredible to be an active part of and it was pretty exceptional to have the opportunity to close the harvest sites myself. The smaller cases were also fun because there was more time to think cerebrally about the anatomy and how to approach closures.</p>
What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)	I did not encounter any major problems; everything ran smoothly.

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What accommodation was provided?	Cape Town: I stayed at a hostel with other elective students Honolulu: I stayed at an airbnb
Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)	Definitely: overall these were two contrasting elective placements and the nature of the reconstruction that I saw was extremely different. In particular, I think that the hands-on teaching that I received from Dr. Alam was second to none and without a doubt, my best experience during the whole of medical school.
Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?	These have been career-defining placements and have consolidated my interest in head and neck reconstruction.