

Cardiovascular surgery, Sheba Hospital – Tel-HaShomer, Israel

I spent my medical elective in Israel assigned to vascular surgery at the Sheba Medical Centre in Tel Hashomer, a suburb of Tel Aviv. This is the largest tertiary referral hospital in the Middle East with 120 departments; originally built in 1948 as the first military hospital.

Every morning I would attend the vascular ward round, although I could not understand what was said between the patient and the doctors, the doctors would kindly translate for me. It was lovely to see the gratitude from both the patient and the relatives when they saw the medical team. It was clear that the doctors worked in a close knit environment. Surprisingly there were no juniors on the vascular team. I noticed that there were fewer nurses on the ward, but more health care assistants than in the UK. Once a week I would attend the vascular outpatient clinic, which was a mixture of referrals and post-operative checks. Clinics gave me the opportunity to practise my vascular examination and to perform small medical procedures such as removing stitches and changing dressings.

The majority of my time was spent in theatres and in the angiography suite. I was fortunate to watch several complicated procedures, such as axillary–femoral bypasses, femoral to femoral bypassing, carotid endarterectomy and open abdominal aortic repairs. It was interesting to see how the surgeons manipulated the blood supply of the patient creating new pathways to ensure good circulation. Having the opportunity to scrub in and assist in procedures allowed me to gain valuable experience and see the anatomy up close.

Academically I gained in depth knowledge on vascular medicine; I also had a morning's master class on how to suture. I practised cannulation with the nurses which helped me to develop confidence in these skills. Overall, the quality of teaching was excellent. All the doctors spoke perfect English, they were very approachable and more than happy to share their knowledge and answer any questions that I had.

Whilst in Israel I stayed in a guest house near to the hospital. The accommodation was in a great location as I could catch a bus to both Tel Aviv and the hospital. I also visited some of the sites that Israel has to offer such as Masada, the Dead Sea, Haifa, Zichron and my favourite – Jerusalem. After placement, I would meet the other exchange students and we would often make our way down to the beaches in Tel Aviv, allowing us to consolidate what we had learnt and seen that day and experience typical Israeli culture. Weekends in Israel were from Friday to Sunday and most shops and public transport would not run, which took a bit of getting used to but only added to the experience. Wherever you were people were friendly and willing to help, this was great, especially when figuring out some of the bus timetables. Israel was a fantastic place for my elective; I would like to thank the Jewish Medical Association for their contribution and would recommend this elective to anyone who wants to experience what Israel is really like.

Charlotte Ziff
Southampton University