

## **Elective in The Anaesthetics Department, New Somerset Hospital, University of Cape Town Medical School, Cape Town, South Africa**

As part of my elective I spent just over three weeks in the busy anaesthetics department of New Somerset Hospital, a public hospital based in the picturesque Waterfront area of Cape Town. I had a number of objectives, which included getting hands-on with all the different aspects of the anaesthetics role, and gaining an insight into the different lifestyles and healthcare needs of the diverse population and, in particular, of the Jewish community.

The elective more than lived up to my expectations. The whole team, from the doctors to the nurses to the porters, were all extremely friendly and welcoming and I got to know them quite well during my time there. My days started at 7.30am and tended to finish at around 6pm. From day one, I was allowed to get involved with the entire care of the patients. This started with meeting the patients, getting to know them a bit, performing a thorough anaesthetics assessment, explaining the anaesthetic and reassuring the patient. This was a very rewarding and educational part of my role. I was then allowed to manage the patient's airway and perform a variety of practical procedures. These included some more routine things such as intravenous cannulation and also some more difficult procedures such as endotracheal intubations and LMA insertions, depending on the operation and patient. This was an amazing experience as I am considering a career in anaesthetics but had never had the opportunity to perform these procedures. It was such a thrill to learn these new skills and every procedure on every patient was very rewarding, as was helping to wake the patients up and ensure their post-operative care was optimal.

During my time in the operating theatre, I learned a lot about how the anaesthetic machine works and essentially how to give an anaesthetic from beginning to end. The staff were often keen to teach and I learned a great deal of physiology and pharmacology as well. I spent quite a lot of my time in the Obstetric Theatre and was lucky enough to learn a lot more about obstetric anaesthesia in addition to performing the spinal anaesthetics.

Although the hospital did not have a formal outreach service, the anaesthetists would go and assess sick patients on the ward, particularly those who were post-op or who were being considered for an operation. I went with, and helped, in the assessments and treatment and found this a very useful and rewarding part of the elective. This really gave me the confidence in assessing and treating the critically ill patient, which will help me in my role as an FY1 next year.

In addition to getting a very hands-on experience of anaesthetics, I was also able to see a lot of conditions and scenarios that I had not seen in the UK. These included end-stage AIDS patients, systemic TB infections, trauma such as stabbed hearts and much more.

My day started and ended with attending daily services in the Sea Point area of Cape Town, which, in addition to staying there over Shabbat, allowed me to get to know the Jewish community of Cape Town. I met doctors, medical students, dentists and a few teenagers considering a career in medicine and enjoyed interacting with them and getting to know them. I was also able to see quite a bit of Cape Town and beyond, which is truly a beautiful city, with so much diversity. Thanks to the grant from the Association, in addition to being able to get to Cape Town, I was able to see and do a lot more and really felt that I got a flavour of what life is like for the Jewish community of Cape Town and for all the diverse population of Cape Town, from a healthcare perspective and what life in general is like.

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