

Paediatrics, Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa / Plastic Surgery, Sheba Hospital – Tel-HaShomer, Israel

The first part of my elective was based in Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town. This hospital opened in 1938, is the main teaching hospital in Cape Town, and is renowned as being where the first human heart transplant was performed in 1967. It is government funded and has 893 beds with departments in most major specialities.

The Paediatric Department has an infant ward, a teenage endocrine ward and specialist clinics in Rheumatology and HIV. On the infant ward I was part of the clerking team presented on ward rounds and helped junior doctors – taking bloods, catheterising, weaning off oxygen, and chasing results. HIV clinics were run both in the hospital and as outreach clinics in the townships. Attending these clinics gave me insight into the complicated and widespread issue of treating HIV. I encountered many different issues about poverty, stigma and compliance.

Electives at the University of Cape Town are much in demand and places are taken very fast so need to be booked at least a year in advance. The elective administrator can be contacted

directly: paschaline.jacobs@uct.ac.za. Accommodation is not provided, but is at some of the other University hospitals. The international students private house is based in Observatory near the hospital but is not in a safe area so one has to be careful. For shabat I went to Sea Point to stay with families there – the community was extremely friendly and I was taken care of very well. Kosher food is not a problem because there are big sections in main supermarkets, Hillel House is on the main campus, and there are restaurants in Sea Point. During the time I spent alone I learned that it is safe to walk around during the day but at night time you should not go out unless in a big group.

The second part of my elective was based at Sheba Hospital, Tel-HaShomer Hospital, which opened in 1948 and is the largest hospital in the Middle East with 150 departments and clinics, and 1700 beds. There are many specialist centres where leading international research is undertaken.

I chose the Department of Plastic Surgery because I had had minimal experience of the field but it did fascinate me. The Department includes the main Burns Unit for the whole of Israel, which is managed by specialist nursing. The majority of cases were reconstructive plastic surgery. The plastic surgeons work closely with the oncologist in treating breast and skin cancer. I attended ward rounds and clinics and had a lot of opportunities to assist in the operating theatre.

I arranged my elective through the electives office (fimsil@post.tau.ac.il). They also have an extensive website dedicated to elective students which was very

helpful: <http://www.medicine.tau.ac.il/index.php/medschool/electives-for-overseas-students>. In July / August accommodation is not provided officially as it is used by exchange programmes, but living with the exchange students proved clean and cheap and was a short bus ride away from the hospital. This meant that I could meet the other elective students and join them in social activities, although I could not go on the Tel Aviv University Medical School activities arranged for them as these were on shabat. The accommodation is across the road from a mall with a supermarket and restaurants.

Leah Mintz
Leeds