

Elective in Anaesthetics at the Ichilov-Sourasky Hospital

I spent the second half of my medical elective in the Anaesthetics Department of the Ichilov-Sourasky Hospital in Tel Aviv. By this point I was in my 5th year of medical school and teetering between a future career in either anaesthetics or obstetrics and gynaecology (which is where I spent the first half of my elective).

When I arrived I was assigned a mentor to guide me through each day of my elective. He was essentially the equivalent of a anaesthetics registrar back here in the UK and took on the role of my mentor brilliantly. Each day he would make sure that I had a surgical list to attend as well as ensuring that the anaesthetists knew who I was and would both teach me and supervise me for procedures. During this time my mentor did a one-on-one session of how to intubate using a model and then went on to guide me through this with real patients. I came to realise later on how invaluable this teaching was as I used the incubation skills I developed during my anaesthetics placement as an FY1 doctor.

Working in Israel also gave me the opportunity to regain my Hebrew language skills which had gone sorely unpractised since 6 years prior to this when I spent my gap year volunteering in Israel. I learned a lot of new vocabulary; however, I also had to develop my non-verbal communication skills when I didn't know certain words or the patient did not speak Hebrew or English. These interactions highlighted how useful and important these non-verbal skills are as a doctor, particularly one interaction when we had an extremely nervous patient going for a C-section. Speaking soothingly to her and holding her hand helped to calm her despite her not actually understanding what I was saying!

Lastly my elective in Israel allowed me to reconnect with my Israeli family where I spent most Friday nights and also to explore more of the country, taking the opportunity to go on trips on weekend and of course eating as much humous and falafel as I could!

It was an incredible experience allowing me to develop both as a doctor and a person and importantly helped me to come to the decision to focus on anaesthetics as a future career.

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