

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

A report that addresses the above four objectives should be written below. Your Elective supervisor will assess this.

Gain an understanding of working as a plastic surgeon through theatre and clinic attendance and ward work - I was given a wide ranging timetable for my 8 weeks that gave me wide ranging experiences in plastic surgery and burns. I was made to feel incredibly welcome in theatre and was able to assist in over 40 operations. I learnt a great deal about breast reconstruction and free flaps, being given the chance to assist in skin sparing mastectomies, then to close the abdomen once the flap was taken. I also assisted in a number of other breast cases including nipple reconstruction, expander removal, debridement of necrotic breast tissue and skin grafting. I was also taught how to interpret abdominal CT scans to identify appropriate perforating blood vessels that isolated as pedicles on DIEP flaps. I was taught how to mark patients pre operatively for breast reconstruction and watching registrars and consultants gain consent for procedures was very useful.

I was able to assist in a number of melanoma scar excisions with sentinel lymph node biopsies. This allowed me to develop my knowledge and understanding of closing skin directly with subcuticular stitching and with local flaps. It demonstrated to me the importance of having very detailed anatomical knowledge so it is possible to identify where perforating blood supplies will come from so local flaps will survive post operatively.

Spending time with the on-call consultant I was able to assist in the debridement of a case of necrotising fasciitis. I went with the consultant to the ward and learnt about the defining signs of the conditions and the importance of quick surgical management to treat the condition. The tissues of the posterior compartments of the lower and upper leg were black and when the compartments were opened a grey liquid flooded out, these are both signs of necrotising fasciitis. The patient had a BMI of over 35, and with the consultant needing access to the posterior aspect of the leg, assisting in the debridement involved holding a 'heavy' leg for an extended period of time which was difficult.

Attending clinics I was able to improve my history taking while learning about several different aspects of being a plastic surgeon. I attended a number of different clinics including burns and cleft palate. The MDT clinic for the cleft palate service had several different professionals including a plastics consultant, registrar, orthodontist, psychologist and geneticist. I was amazed by how many people were involved and how the clinic ran so smoothly despite this. In burns clinic I improved my knowledge in treating burns in the long term and how scars mature. I improved my understanding of how massage, pressure garments and laser can all help aid scar healing. Most importantly I learnt that managing patient expectations is a crucial part of the consultation.

Spending time on the wards I was able to develop my ability to observe and identify flaps post operatively, an important skill for a plastics registrar. I was able to spend time with SHO's doing ward jobs and getting advice on working as an SHO in plastics.

Gain an insight and understanding into the role research plays in being a plastic surgeon and get involved in some research myself - I was able to undertake research during my elective and was involved in a number of projects. Having been awarded an elective bursary by the Scar Free Foundation & British Burns Association for my project Burns Amputations in a tertiary referral centre: a 30 year review. As burns amputations are a topic that has limited literature I wanted to investigate the impact burns

amputations have in the short and long term. This project involved; designing the study and data collection tools, gathering data from patient records for a number of parameters including mechanism of injury, level of amputation and length of hospital stay.

Other projects I have been involved in are around the topic of burns in mass casualty disasters. This involved data collection, analysis of casualty data from any incident defined as a mass casualty event (an event with a minimum of 10 injured/killed). From this I analysed any incidents that had at least one cutaneous burn. I then furthered the investigation by examining the severity and size of the burns in these cases. I focussed first on these incidents occurring in the UK. I then looked further afield and collected data on countries within the EU.

It has been an excellent experience being involved in burns research. It has allowed me to broaden knowledge on data collection, analysis and how to write papers for peer review. The process of finalising this research is still ongoing but I hope these project will become published papers or presentations.

Understanding the role that plastic surgery can have on public health, relating to trauma, cleft palate and burns. The impact this can have psychologically and economically on individuals and the wider society - Plastic surgery has a large role to play in both public and global health. Individuals that suffer severe burns may not be able to work continue work, often in cases of burnt extremities or burns amputations patients are disabled as a result. Effective management of these patients can vastly improve their prognosis. These patients will often suffer psychologically and economically as a result and so effective management is important both for the individual and the wider society. Plastic surgery also plays a role in global health, with many plastic surgeons travelling abroad to provide care to those who are unable to access surgical care for things such as cleft palate which can often lead to segregation of patients and their families in less developed areas of the world.

Provide me with knowledge of the role of a plastic surgeon, enable me to develop and diversify my portfolio for plastic specialty training application - Carrying out my elective at a tertiary referral centre for plastic surgery has been invaluable. Working under top consultants has been an incredible learning experience. I have gained knowledge about the role of a plastic surgeon, what things are important for a competitive portfolio. I feel that carrying out my burns amputation project at the renowned St Andrews centre was a large factor in being awarded an elective bursary from the Scar Free Foundation which no doubt strengthen my portfolio. The chance to carry out and complete research as well as add a great number of procedures to my surgical logbook have given me a fantastic insight into what it takes to be a plastic surgeon and completely confirmed it is the career path I will follow.