



Electives Unmasked:

Talk 1:

Different Locations and Experiences

Presented By :
CBS Student Committee 2025/26

Dubai

Electives Talk

By Sarah Mahmood



What is an elective?

An elective is a self-selected placement that allows medical students to explore healthcare in a different environment.

It provides opportunities for clinical exposure, professional development, and personal growth outside the usual curriculum.

Why electives matter?

Electives allow you to experience new healthcare systems, develop independence, and see conditions you may not encounter in the UK.

They strengthen your portfolio, enhance your confidence, and provide talking points for interviews and future applications.

Factors to consider

Consider the country, healthcare system, safety, costs, supervision, and the type of experience you want.

Think about whether you prefer a busy hospital, a teaching-focused environment, or a more hands-on setting.

Look at timing, duration, accommodation options, and visa requirements.

Career Planning

Choose an elective that aligns with your long-term interests, even if you're unsure of your specialty.

Look for placements where you can learn skills, gain insight into practice, and possibly take part in audit, QI, or research.

Practical Tips

Consider the cost of flights, accommodation, insurance, visas, and day-to-day living.
Check vaccination requirements early.

Look into bursaries or funding opportunities.

Confirm all documentation with your medical school.

Red Flags



Avoid placements with unclear supervision, no formal approval, or unrealistic promises of hands-on procedures.

Be cautious if communication is poor or if safety arrangements are not clear.

Dubai

I chose Dubai because of its modern healthcare system, diverse patient population, and reputation for high clinical standards.

I wanted exposure to a different style of healthcare delivery while remaining in a safe and well-supported environment.

It also offered a unique combination of cultural and professional experience.



Thank you

Panama



PANAMA

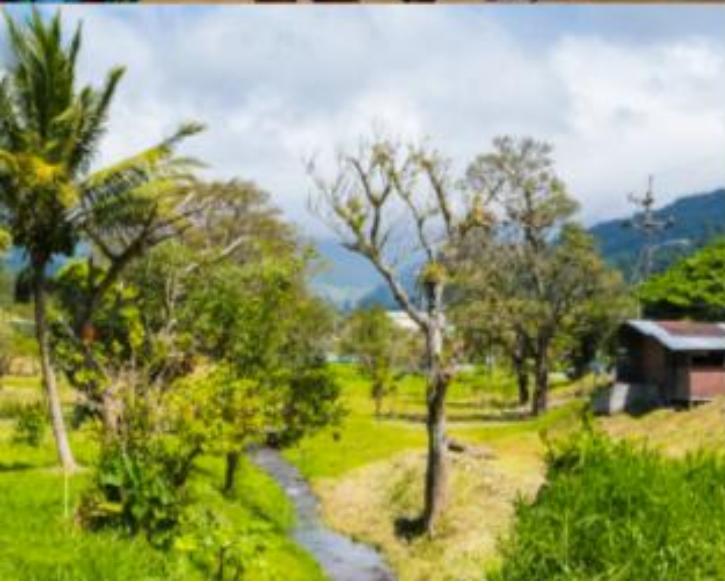
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EXPERIENCE IN PANAMA

I travelled out to Panama and worked alongside general practitioners and dentists in indigenous communities with consultations, pharmacy, dental procedures and educational workshops - I did this as a medical brigade through a charity.



PANAMA

- Located in Central America, connecting North & South America
- Population -4 million
- Capital city: Panama City
- Mix of urban centres and rural/indigenous communities
- Spanish is the main language - we had a translator
- Panama has about 16–17 doctors per 10,000 people, but most are concentrated in cities like Panama City.
- In Indigenous regions, there are far fewer doctors and health facilities than the national average, with some communities having no permanent doctor at all.
- Indigenous women have maternal mortality rates up to 3–4 times higher than non-Indigenous women.
- Only about 57% of births in Indigenous areas are attended by skilled health professionals, compared to over 90% nationally.
- Chronic malnutrition affects 30–60% of Indigenous children, compared to about 10% nationally.
- Nearly 90–98% of Indigenous people live in poverty or extreme poverty, which limits access to healthcare, transportation, and proper nutrition.

HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

- Two main systems:
- Public healthcare (limited access in rural areas)
- Private healthcare (high quality but expensive)
- Rural and indigenous communities often face:
- Limited access to doctors
- Long travel distances to clinics
- Lack of preventative healthcare



- Based in rural or underserved communities
- Clinics are often temporary mobile clinics
- Fast-paced, hands-on learning environment
- Strong focus on:
- Preventive care (fluoride) or symptomatic treatment (analgesia)
- Primary healthcare
- Public health education

TIMETABLE

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
7:00 AM	Airport Pick up & Transport to Lodging Facility	BREAKFAST					
8:00 AM		Transport to Community	Transport to Community	Transport to Community	Transport to Community	Transport to Community	
9:00 AM							
10:00 AM		Research Day (Community Household Survey)	Medical Clinic	Medical Clinic	Medical Clinic	Cultural Immersion Activity	
11:00 AM						Transport to Lodging Facility	
12:00 NN		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	
1:00 PM		Transport to Lodging Facility					
2:00 PM			Medical Clinic	Medical Clinic	Medical Clinic		
3:00 PM		Medications Packing & Charla Preparation	Transport to Lodging Facility	Transport to Lodging Facility	Transport to Lodging Facility	Research Workshop & Presentation	
4:00 PM	Settle In						
5:00 PM	Introduction to Global Brigades		Research Workshops & Teams Discussion		Medications Inventory		
6:00 PM		Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
7:00 PM	Dinner		Reflection (Medication List and Community main diseases)	Reflection (HCP exchange)	Reflection (Measuring your medical brigade impact)		
8:00 PM	Medical Program Introduction & Holistic Model Overview	Mock Clinic				Final Reflection, Pack Up!	
9:00 PM		Data Informatics Introduction	Data Informatics				

JOBS AS A MEDICAL STUDENT



Clinical Activities

- Patient intake and triage
- Taking medical histories
- Measuring vital signs (BP, pulse, weight)
- Assisting physicians and nurses
- Observing consultations and procedures

Dentistry :

- Assisting in dental procedures - cleaning equipment, providing fluoride treatment

Pharmacy:

- Working with the pharmacy team (collecting medications for prescriptions)
- Communication substitutes for medication between the doctor and the pharmacy

Workshops:

Ran a workshop on teeth cleaning and provided toothpaste, tooth brushes and other useful freebies for patients while they waited for pharmacy prescriptions

COSTS



7 Days:

- Flights = approx. £1200
- Accommodation, food and organisation costs = approx. £1110

Any extras for snacks, equipment needed

I raised money through bake sales with another student at my university.



PACKING LIST

- Suncream
- Bug spray (NEED)
- Portable chargers
- Water bottle
- Passport (valid for at least 6 months)
- Copy of passport (paper + digital)
- Travel insurance documents
- Elective confirmation printed off - asked us at the border, need accommodation address and flight return details
- Hand sanitiser
- Personal prescription medications (in original packaging)
- Charger cables

Sort out:

- eSIM for Panama
- Vaccinations - look at government advice
- Medical insurance
- If wanting to travel to other countries on the way back, look at VISA - we went to New York after as it was a joining flight

CHALLENGES

- Language barrier (Spanish)
- Limited resources compared to hospitals at home
- High patient numbers and time pressure
- Emotional challenges seeing health inequality
- Need an organisation to help with commuting (I wouldn't recommend going alone)

REMEMBER: Don't take pictures without consent (children cannot consent) - Don't contribute to volunteer tourism

YOU CAN ALSO DO AN ELECTIVE IN THE UK

For this year, I have arranged one of my electives in South Lakes Dermatology Service, including a GP placement and some work with women's health. I have offered my services to provide an audit that the service will be interested in. I have also offered my services for venepuncture, assisting with minor dermatological surgeries, etc. - essentially free labour (word it as if you will be an asset and volunteer yourself for opportunities)

It's FREE

You gain close connections and recommendations
Can still get a lot out of it
EMAIL EVERYONE - you don't ask, you don't get!

ANY
QUESTIONS?

**THANK
YOU!**

USA

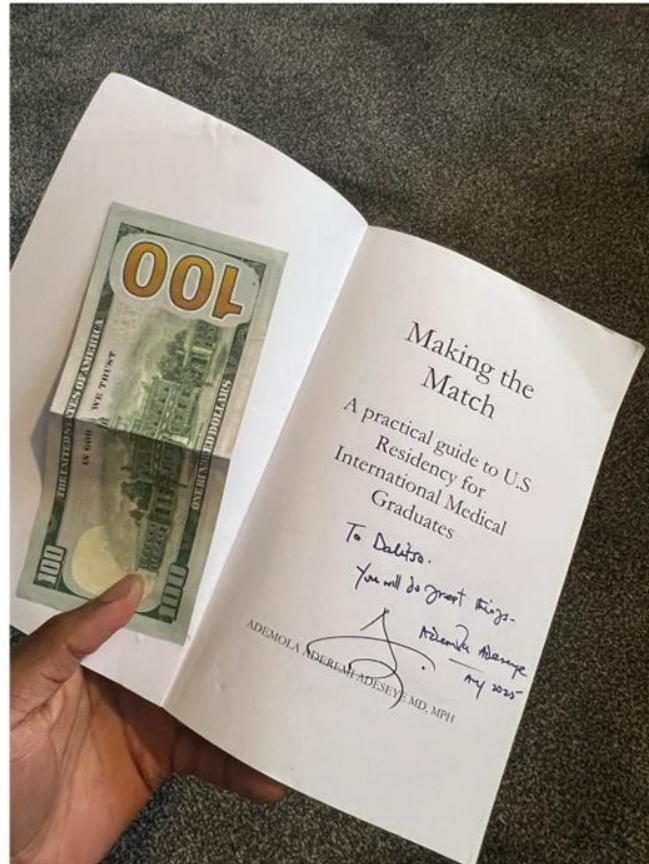
USA Cardiothoracics Elective

BY DALITSO MWALE

AKA A_SURGEONS_JOURNEY



Do your research



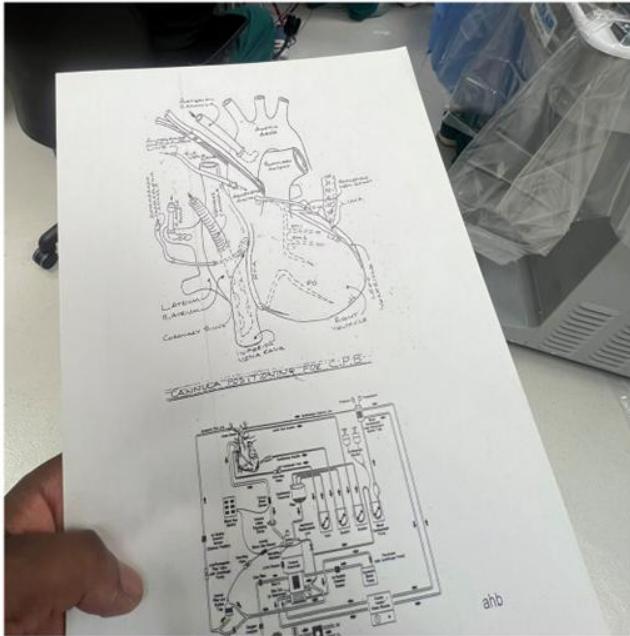
Make sure you're prepared



The Experience: Clinic



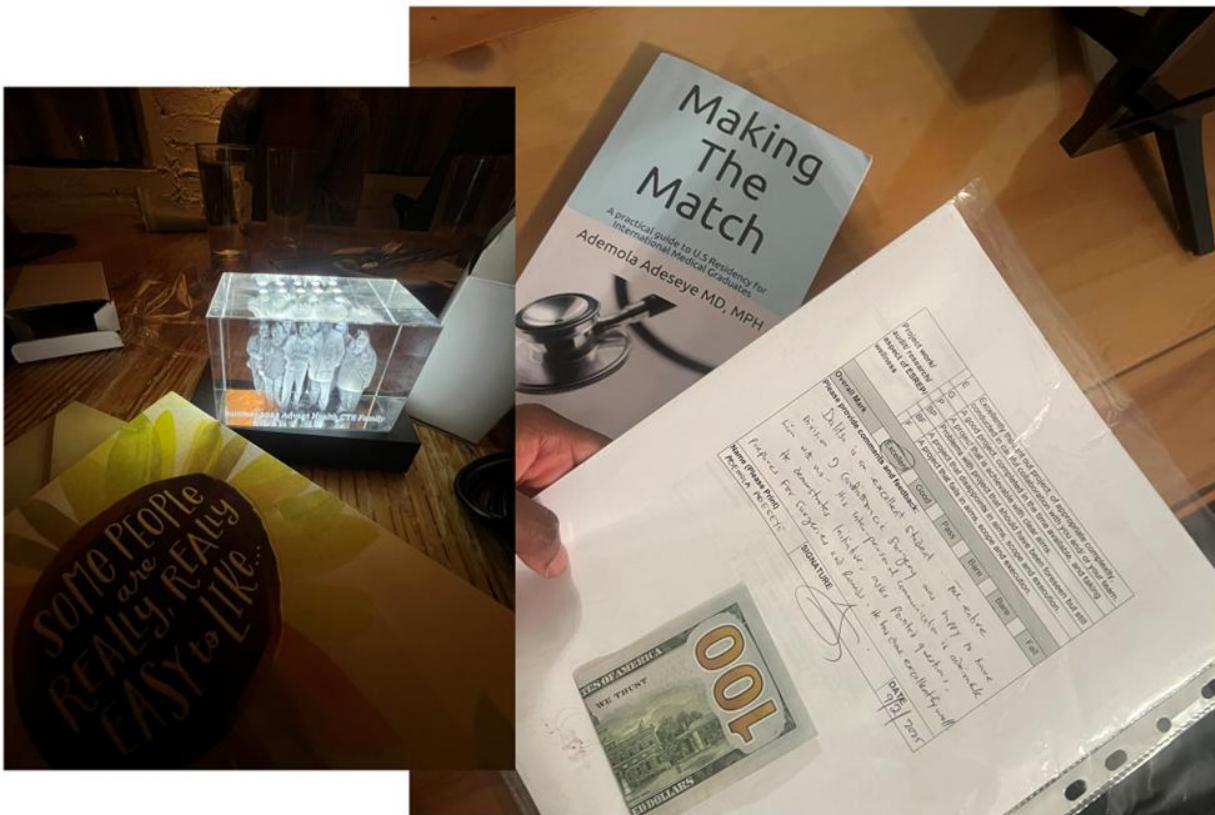
The Experience: Surgery



The Experience: The Team



Making an Impact and LoR



Ademola Adeseye MD, FACS · 1st
Cardiothoracic Surgeon | Board Certified General Sur...
3d ·

Did our first lobectomy on our new DaVinci 5 Robot today. Glad to have med student [Dalitso Mwale](#) from the University of Leeds shadowing me this month. Inspiring the next generation, one at a time.



Leave your thoughts here...

@



Home



My Network



Post



Notifications



Jobs

Layover



Free Time

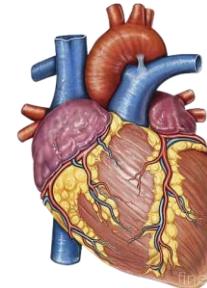


**Thank you
for listening**



UK

Where I undertook my summer elective



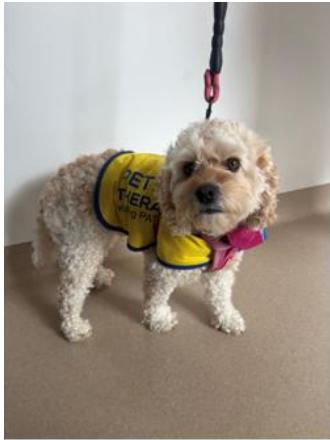
Royal Papworth Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust



A week in my life during my elective

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	
08:00	Coffee with supervisor							
09:00								
10:00	Clinic	Surgical ward round		ICU consultant ward round			Theatre case 1	
11:00		Board round						
12:00		Cont'd ward round	Theatre		Theatre		Work on case report	
13:00								
14:00	Cath lab	Clerking, case discussions with registrars, clinical skills practice		MDT meeting				
15:00								
16:00			Enhanced recovery unit	ICU registrar-led ward round	Enhanced recovery unit	Theatre case 2		
17:00		See tmr's patient		See tmr's patient				

Don't forget to have fun!



FEEDBACK FORM

**Please fill the feedback form to let us
know how you found the session!**

**Slides will be emailed to you on
completion of the feedback form!**



Thank You!

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Next Talk: Wednesday, 17 Nov 2025