



**Edinburgh University Student Elective Report**

Country visited	Malawi
City or town	Lilongwe and Blantyre
Hospital/unit/clinic	Kamuzu Central in Lilongwe, and Queen Elizabeth's Central in Blantyre
Dates visited (length)	October to December 2010
Supervising doctor	Dr Muyco
Contact details of your host:	-
Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)	<p>Very interesting Elective. I saw and was involved in a lot of surgery. The hospital has Interns and Residents, so is used to having juniors to teach and assist in theatre. Having made myself available, I was often heavily involved assisting procedures. I had a lot of responsibility overall: Monday, Wednesday and Friday are operating days. Tuesday and Thursday have Ward Rounds and clinics (with Saturday optional). After one week, I saw my own patients on the Ward Round (with my team of two Clinical Officer students as translators). There were senior colleagues "available" further on the round, but I had to make decisions about diagnoses, referrals to medicine, pre-op care, scheduling of operations (and sorting all the blood, etc required), post-op care and discharge information. Scheduling people for theatre the next day then took the form of arguing the case for your patients at the meeting post-Rounds. Quite a lot to take on board when the medicine seems so different, the care from other team members (especially nurses) is poor to say the least and resources, e.g. antibiotics or antihypertensives, even blood, are often unavailable. The experience has given me confidence that I might have learned something from the last 5 years!</p> <p>The Elective also gave me a chance to teach the Clinical Officer Students, who are part of the College of Medicine and are somewhere between a Doctor and a Nurse in training and skills. The students are poorly taught, so are keen for any extra sessions you can put together.</p> <p>Also visited Blantyre's QECH Medical and Surgical Wards. They were a lot more organised, a lot cleaner and are more used to</p>

	<p>medical students (so provide teaching) as there are many more Western doctors and the Medical School in Malawi (which has links with both Edinburgh University and the RCSEd) is situated there. They see a very similar amount of pathology and given that they are more geared towards teaching, I would recommend an Elective there over Kamuzu.</p>
<p>What were the best things about the visit? (150 words max]</p>	<p>Practical experience, especially in a Tropical Medicine setting. It was also good to gain confidence that I have learned something in the last 5 years!</p>
<p>What problems did you encounter? (150 words max)</p>	<p>Anyone thinking of coming out here must be prepared for the horror of an African hospital, though: poorly organised, poorly resourced, filthy, very smelly, overcrowded (sometimes two to a bed, with another on a mattress underneath), enormously frustrating to get things done (often spending time arguing with lazy staff) and then there is the pathology: people wait a long time before consulting the hospital, so come in with enormous tumours, horrible burns and foul infections.</p> <p>Malawi is peaceful, but there are still a fair number of stabbings, shootings and car accidents, and the post-op infection rate can be exceptionally frustrating.</p> <p>Malawi as a Country was, at the time I was there, suffering from a lot of financial/political problems. The Country was fundamentally bankrupt, so had no fuel imports for 3 weeks while I was there. That made transport difficult/impossible and then stopped operations as the back-up generator could not be fuelled. The political structure is fundamentally rotten, and this can be pretty frustrating as an outsider.</p>
<p>What accommodation was provided?</p>	<p>None. In Lilongwe, would highly recommend staying at Mabuya Camp. It is safe, cheapish, nice accommodation and the owners are lovely people. Worth contacting Dundee Medical School as well as their 5<sup>th</sup> years can undertake their Gen Med block in Kamuzu Central. They have a car and stay in a flat in a very nice hotel.</p>
<p>Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)</p>	<p>Would recommend going to Blantyre over Lilongwe from the point of view of being in a better quality teaching hospital. Would recommend going with another person as well: keeps you sane when you have had a frustrating day! You should also make sure you are prepared to be deeply irritated and frustrated most of the time. Certainly not an easy Elective.</p>
<p>Details of any funding you received:</p>	<p>-</p>

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Your name	James Blackmur
Contact email: (optional)	jamesblackmur@hotmail.com
<b>Category of Elective</b> (delete as appropriate)	General Surgery

Many thanks for filling out this form. It will be uploaded in pdf form on the Society's website.

James Blackmur  
ESSS Publicity Officer  
On behalf of the ESSS Committee

Bernard Roberston  
ESSS Vice President

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