

SENIOR ELECTIVE IN ANAESTHETICS AND INTENSIVE CARE

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



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INTRODUCTION AND SETTING

- Thanks to the generous support of the West of Scotland Anaesthetic Teaching organisation, I was able to complete a four-week elective in anaesthesia and intensive care at Scarborough General Hospital in Tobago. Tobago is the smaller of the two islands that make up the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. With a population of around 60,000 people, life on the island is relaxed and community-oriented, offering a slower pace than Trinidad while still providing a rich mix of clinical and cultural experiences.
- Scarborough General Hospital, the primary hospital on the island, is a modern 100-bed facility offering acute services and universal care to the local population. It functions much like a District General Hospital in the UK, managing most medical needs locally, though some patients are transferred to Trinidad for more specialised treatment.

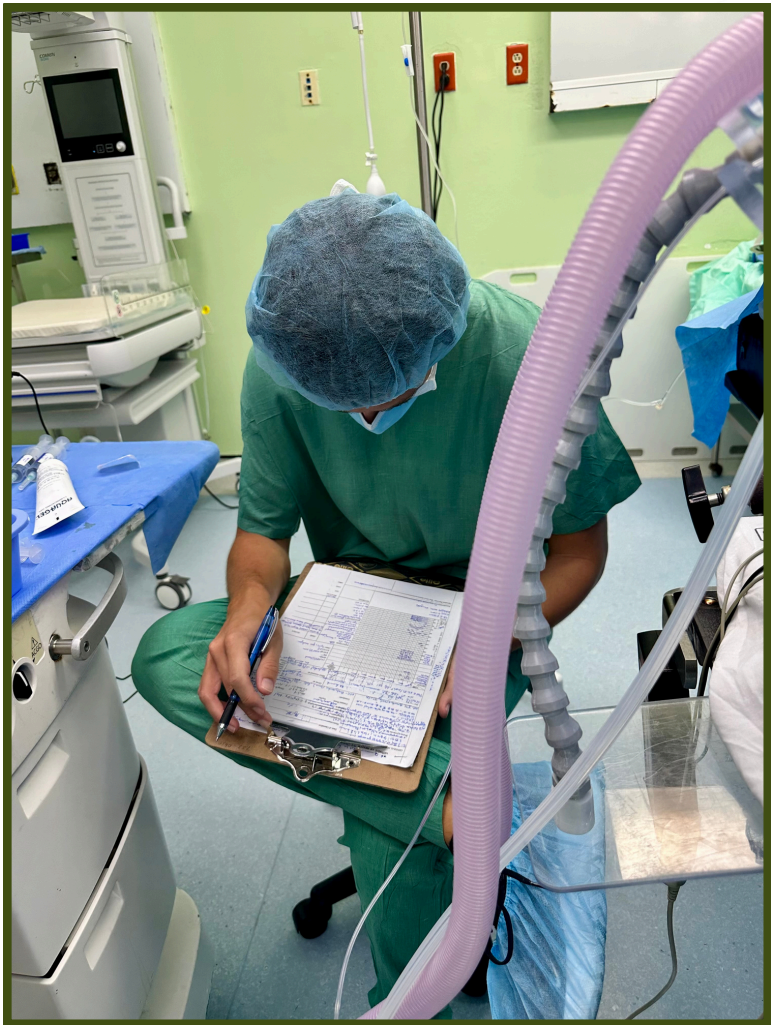


OBJECTIVES

- As a widening-participation student from Glasgow, I was eager to broaden my horizons and observe how anaesthetic and critical care services operate in a different cultural and resource setting. Before starting, I set out a few key objectives:
 - To develop and improve my airway management skills by assisting with intubation, ventilation techniques, and perioperative airway care.
 - To understand anaesthetic techniques in a resource-limited setting by comparing drug choices, pain management, and fluid resuscitation strategies.
 - To enhance my clinical decision-making, in critical care, by assessing and managing critically ill patients with limited investigative tools.
 - To explore the anaesthetist's role beyond the operating theatre in intensive care, pain management, and emergency medicine.
 - To adapt to a different healthcare system by understanding the challenges of anaesthetic and critical care delivery in Tobago.

CLINICAL ACTIVITIES

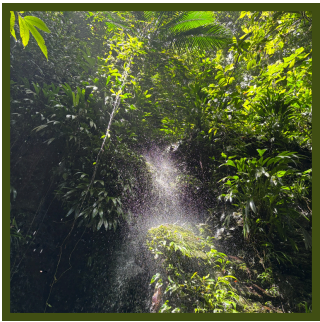
➤ For the first three weeks of my time at the hospital, I worked in the Operating Department. Each day began with an 8am briefing on the theatre list and patients, before I joined a theatre for the day. I initially helped with pre-operative care and gradually integrated into the team. As my confidence grew, I took on more responsibility. I prepared and drew up drugs, assisted with intubations under supervision, and learned basic peri-operative skills such as how to attach monitoring equipment, manage intravenous fluids, and support patient recovery. In my final week, I joined the daily Intensive Care Unit ward round. This typically involved helping to review investigations, discuss management plans with the multidisciplinary team, and support patient monitoring. This experience gave me a real sense of how anaesthetists contribute across both acute and critical care, and highlighted the importance of communication, teamwork, and adaptability.



➤ My time in the operating department allowed me to observe both elective and emergency procedures, including many situations where limited resources required the team to problem-solve creatively and prioritise carefully. Most of these problems arose from a lack of blood products meaning elective operations, particularly caesarean sections, were often cancelled with very little notice. There were also shortages of certain drugs, such as fentanyl, which meant the team had to adapt pain management strategies. This taught me a lot about clinical decision-making and highlighted the importance of careful planning.

NON-CLINICAL ACTIVITIES

➤ Outside the hospital, living in Tobago gave me the chance to experience local culture and community life. Participating in the month-long heritage festival and more simply everyday life, helped me appreciate how culture and context shape healthcare delivery and patient perspectives.



REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

➤ Overall, my time in Tobago was an invaluable opportunity to gain insight into anaesthesia and critical care whilst also developing a deeper understanding of unfamiliar cultures. The support of WOSAT made this experience possible, and I am extremely grateful for the generous financial aid which was granted. Moving forward, I hope that I am now more equipped to work in different healthcare settings, and I feel much more confident in my ability to care for patients from a variety of different backgrounds.

