My medical elective was undertaken at Kiwoko hospital Uganda. Kiwoko is a Christian mission hospital set in rural Uganda, within the Luwero triangle, and with this comes a very different spectrum of patients compared with Nottingham University!

The Hospital has 7 main units that students can be involved in: Female and Male medical and surgical units, Paediatrics, Maternity and NICU. There is also a TB ward, Outpatients department, Community team, Physio department, Rehabilitation and nutrition department and the HIV/AIDS programme to keep you busy!

There is a doctor based on each of the main units that students can attach themselves to. They are all keen for you to be involved and become part of the team. The average day varies depending on which doctor you are with but generally it begins with ward rounds at 7:30am. This is followed by morning prayers at 8:15am finishing around 9am. Then it is the doctors meeting where patients from the on-call doctor are discussed and handed over. This is often followed by a short teaching session or discussion on some new research. At 10am surgery will start in theatre, paediatrics will often still have to finish the ward round and other wards will have new patients to see or jobs to do. Lunch is in the guest house between 1pm and 2pm. In the afternoon students continue to work on the wards, join one of the other departments or do community visits for STI tutoring, AIDS counselling and immunisations. The evenings are a time for relaxation, football, table tennis, playing lots of cards or seeing friends! At the weekends there are opportunities to explore Kiwoko or the capital Kampala. Alternatively, further a field there is Lake Victoria, Murchison Falls (with safari), silver-back gorilla trekking in the far west and white-water rafting down the source of the Nile for those looking for an adrenalin buzz!

I have had the most wonderful time here in Kiwoko. The staff and nursing students from the nearby nursing school make you feel very welcome. Most of the patients speak the local language “Luganda” and the nursing students are excellent at helping you get through the language barrier, (although a full neurological examination through a translator is fun!!) My time here has challenged me medically, personally and spiritually. My medical skills have greatly improved and confidence in my abilities, although sometimes shaken, is now much stronger. The senior staff are always on hand to offer advice and help with any decisions, but one of the more enjoyable things is that you have far more autonomy than an F1 would at home (even if this can be daunting at times!) There is also plenty of opportunity to increase your portfolio of skills such as ascitic taps, lumbar punctures, CPR and building management plans.
Personally my time here has led me to reflect on my attitudes and interactions with those around me. The language and cultural differences have made me far more patient and compassionate with the people I meet and I suspect far more grateful for what the NHS has to offer once I get home! There have been some difficult times as well as fun times. I had never seen a child die before in England and yet here, sadly this is too frequent an occurrence. I have also had to cope with the poverty and problems with which so many of my patients and their families go through. However, the graciousness with which they tackle their difficulties and the happiness they find in the small things is very humbling and wonderful to see.

The hospital advertises itself as a Christian Mission hospital and morning prayers and church meetings have strengthened my relationship with God, whilst also testing it at times, when I became angry at the difficulties so many of my patients go through! On the flipside, there were many happy times when sick patients did get better and go home and when families seemed to pull together to help each other, which was wonderful to witness.

The elective programme here is well run and well organised. I felt secure and looked after in my medical work and personal life. I would thoroughly recommend this for anyone wishing to experience Christian morals and attitudes portrayed through a caring and dedicated hospital team.

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