

AN ELECTIVE IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE, CAPE TOWN

By Tess Blandamer

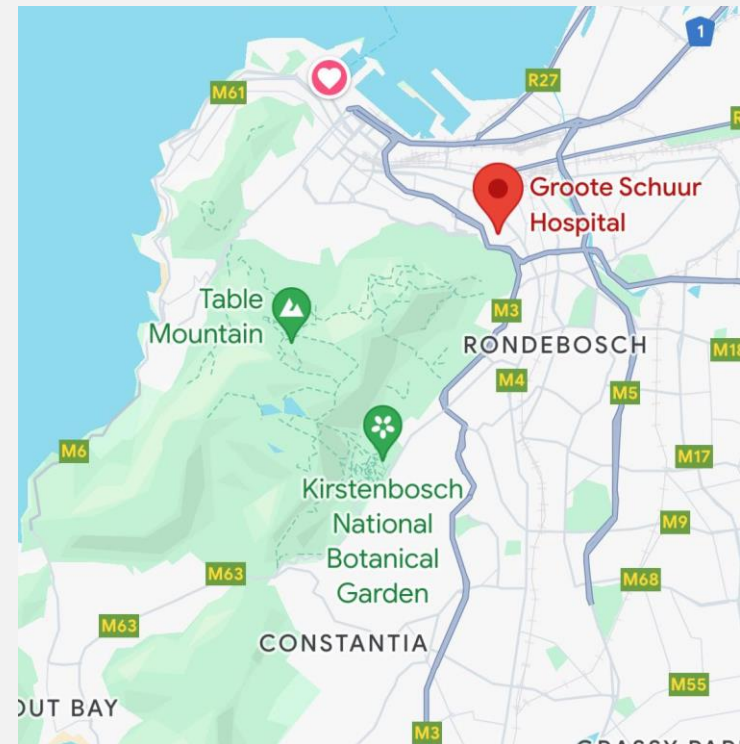
A BIT ABOUT ME

- Current 5th year medical student at the University of Liverpool
- Invited to talk today as I received the Gus Tang Student Bursary Award to undertake my elective last summer
- Interested in emergency and pre-hospital medicine
- Experience included:
 - BSc in Urgent and Emergency Care (1st Class with Honours)
 - Lead point of contact for the Faculty of Pre Hospital Care student volunteers
 - Deputy team leader for StreetDoctors Liverpool
 - Committee member and regular teacher for Liverpool Wilderness Medicine Society
 - Volunteer on the European Trauma Course, Bristol 2022



THE ELECTIVE

- Applied through the University of Cape Town in Sept 2022
- Offered place in Emergency Department (CI5) of Groote Schuur Hospital, tertiary public hospital located next to table mountain
- 4 week elective, 24/07/23 - 18/08/23, travelled for 3 weeks following elective
- Awarded Gus Tang Bursary from Blackpool – completed Medicine C placement here during 4th year (geriatrics and rheumatology)



WHY I CHOSE SOUTH AFRICA

- Experience and learn in an environment very different to the UK, due to issues such as:
 - Poverty
 - Communicable diseases: TB, HIV, syphilis
 - **Violence and trauma**
- (+ Cape Town looked stunning)



A TYPICAL DAY

- 8am: Morning handover
- 8:15am: Ward round – resus, majors and medicals or holding psychiatry and minors
- 9am: See patients
- Have lunch when possible !
- 4am: Afternoon handover
- 8pm: Home time

- However did work a range of shifts including twilights and weekends

THE LEARNING CURVE

- Was **steep!**
- In my first couple of weeks of elective, I faced many challenges
- But it was from these challenges that I learnt so much

CHALLENGE I: THE VOLUME OF HIGH ACUITY PATIENTS

- Due to:
 - High burden of morbidity including non-communicable diseases – TB, HIV
 - Overwhelmed public healthcare system
- What I learnt:
 - Clinical skills: ABGs, chest compressions
 - Recognizing limits of competency / 'saying no' e.g. to LPs, chest drains

CHALLENGE 2: AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF MEDICINE

- Due to:
 - Time pressure
 - Accepted way to practice medicine
 - Racism – in my opinion
- What I learnt:
 - Importance of communication
 - Value of patient-led decision making

CHALLENGE 3: PERSONAL SAFETY

- Due to:
 - TB
 - Psychiatric area
 - Getting home
- What I learnt
 - Infection control
 - The difference in acute psychiatry
 - Safety in South Africa

BUT DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES

- I started feeling a little more comfortable!
- Began to get to know people, the department and the hospital
- And then ...

THE 2023 CAPE TOWN TAXI STRIKE

- On 03/08/23 The City of Cape Town local authority passed a law to make it illegal for taxi drives to drive without a license or insurance
- This sparked the beginning of a week-long violent protests
- Blocked main roads out of Cape Town, shooting vehicles and burning buses
- Lack of transportation caused a pseudo-lockdown state
- Medical students pulled from all hospitals except Groote Schuur



2023 Cape Town taxi strike

3 Aug 2023 – 10 Aug 2023



Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_Cape_Town_taxi_strike

2023 Cape Town taxi strike

On 2 August 2023 the City of **Cape Town** impounded a number of minibus **taxis** at the **Cape Town Central Taxi rank** in the city centre for violating the National Land ...

[Background](#) · [Timeline](#) · [Impact](#)



THE IMPACT ON THE HOSPITAL AND MY ROLE

- Influx in trauma patients, more code red patients
- Understaffing: of nurses, HCAs, porters, security
- = took on the roles of the trauma team that were missing e.g.
 - Catheter insertion
 - Pushing trollys
 - Finding family members outside
- Now even more aware of the importance of the MDT

OVERALL

- An invaluable experience for both my professional and personal development:
- Gained medical knowledge and skills that will carry forward for the rest of my career
- But more importantly – experiences really have helped shape my perspective on life
- Including the fact I am now much more grateful to live in a place where strikes mean waving banners on picket lines!
- Thankyou again to the Gus Tang Bursary for enabling me to have this experience

THANKYOU FOR LISTENING

- Any questions?

