

Neurosurgery Elective in Bangalore, India

SBNS Undergraduate Bursary Report

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My fascination for neurosurgery developed through my keen interest in neuroanatomy and student-selected components in medical school. Learning about the brain and all its function beyond the medical curriculum alongside combining it with the pathological mysteries of the nervous system is enthralling. Having conducted research in this area and working with junior and senior colleagues in this speciality, has shown me how rewarding a career in neurosurgery can be. To expand my understanding of neurosurgery and satisfy my curiosity, I organised an elective in Neurosurgery in India.

Bangalore is a great city in Southern India to undertake a neurosurgical elective. I completed my elective across two hospitals there – Manipal Hospital, a private hospital and NIMHANS, a public hospital. I organised my time at Manipal Hospital with Dr Veekshit Shetty, with whom I had the privilege to undertake a study at St. George's Hospital during his fellowship there. NIMHANS is an 'Institute of National importance' in India with it being the foremost institute for neurosurgical care and practices in the country. With such an institute located in a metropolitan area, it was visited by patients both local and afar from countries such as Bangladesh. Working in both these settings helped me appreciate neurosurgery from more than just a clinical perspective.

My typical day

I started my elective at Manipal Hospital with Dr Shetty for a period of 2.5 weeks. Our typical day started with ward rounds and then either a clinic or time in the operative theatre depending on the schedule. During my free time, I spent time with the neurologists who specialised in epilepsy, and this helped me understanding the neurosurgical management for epilepsy. In addition, I improved my understanding of EEGs, nerve conduction studies and brain/spine radiological imaging. It was fascinating to observe minimally invasive treatment options for trigeminal neuralgia by radiofrequency ablation of the branches of the trigeminal nerve and the sudden relief of pain in patients. Sitting-in on clinics, helped me understand patient's sentiments towards surgery in-terms of its outcome and prognosis. Through this, I audited the common complications of surgery for chronic subdural haematomas and created a patient information leaflet to aid in patient decision making for the hospital.

I spent the rest of my time at NIMHANS. At NIMHANS, I was a part of the neurosurgical team under Professor Shukla, who was also the head of the department. Our days began with a morning teaching session where the junior residents would discuss the cases they had planned for the day and answer any questions. This would be followed by a ward round and joining the theatre team for the whole day to observe cases. I was fortunate to observe tumour resection surgery from all cranial fossae including the ventricles. It was really captivating to see an endoscopic third ventriculostomy, microvascular decompression for trigeminal neuralgia and anastomosis of the Superior Temporal Artery – Middle cerebral artery (STA-MCA) for Moya Moya disease. The morning teaching and theatre helped me continually develop my neuroanatomy and appreciate the difficult approaches neurosurgeons must take to reach the interior parts of the brain. Once a week, I was involved in running clinics where I clerked patients and discussed the case with seniors. Given the language barriers, this experience has developed my adaptability in terms of patient care and helped improve my symptom localisation.

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Through this elective, I have learned more about than just clinical neurosurgery. Learning to appreciate the socio-economic factors associated with patient care has been eye-opening and has improved my understanding of wholistic care. I would like to thank Dr Veekshit Shetty and his team at Manipal Hospital and the neurosurgery department at NIMHANS for the opportunity and making this elective a memorable one. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Society for British Neurological Surgeons for their financial support.

