

## SBNS Undergraduate Elective Bursary Report

Oktaý Genel, MBBS, MSc  
King's College London

During my first elective, I was given the opportunity to spend 4 weeks at the world-renowned Johns Hopkins Department of Neurosurgery. I had received very positive feedback from colleagues who did this elective the year before, which has prompted me to apply too. This has been an incredibly rewarding experience and has without a doubt been the most unique part of my medical school journey.

My main objectives for this hands-on sub-internship were:

- Developing my knowledge of neurosurgery from the operative and non-operative aspect
- Practicing my basic neurosurgery skills: patient examination, burr hole drilling, suturing
- Developing my understanding of neurosurgical practice in an American environment.



I have had the chance to extensively fulfil all three of those objectives. I managed to learn a lot from all the residents and attendings in all sub-specialities of neurosurgery, including vascular, oncology, functional, paediatrics and spine. All attendings were at the summit of their speciality and were offering the most advanced therapeutic strategies.

Every week, I followed a different junior resident through each one of the services they covered. The day was organised with a pre-round of all inpatients at 5.15am with the junior resident. This was followed by a handover to the senior resident and a visit of all critically unwell patients in the neuro-ICU. There was a subsequent meeting with the medical neuro-ICU team to discuss plans and ongoing management. I then attended

teaching at 6am, where one of the residents presented an interesting case to the rest of the residents and faculty, alongside breakfast. There were weekly grand rounds involving eminent speakers. I also had the chance to present my work at one of those meetings.

Cases started at 7am. I had the opportunity to scrub to more than forty complex cases. The range of pathologies I have encountered during this elective was impressive: awake craniotomies, brainstem cavernomas, aneurysms, expanded endonasal approaches, large skull base meningiomas, paediatric head trauma, advanced spinal robotics... Being able to scrub to such cases has been extremely motivating. The most memorable case I have witnessed was an absolutely mind-blowing SCIT approach for a pineal tumour, performed by Prof. Alan Cohen. The beauty of the posterior fossa had once again amazed me. I understood the necessity for all neurosurgeons to aspire to and become neuroanatomy masters, in order to make the difficult work of the neurosurgeon “more accurate, gentle and safe”, in Dr Rhoton’s words.

I would like to thank the whole neurosurgery department at Johns Hopkins for all the learning, inspiration, discussions and thoughtful advice. I would also like to thank the SBNS for generously supporting my elective by awarding this bursary.