I spent my 6 week elective placement with the Department of Anaesthesia at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth, Western Australia. This is one of the two main teaching hospitals in Perth and it is closely associated with several universities including the University of Western Australia, Notre Dame and Edith Cowan Universities.

The hospital treats approximately 75,000 inpatients, 45,000 emergency presentations and 500,000 outpatients annually and has 607 beds available, 105 of which are day patient beds. It covers all medical and surgical specialities with the exception of obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics.

Developing my practical skills
I spent most of my time in theatre where I had many opportunities to develop my practical skills, such as gaining intravascular access, preparing medications and airway management. I enjoyed being given the responsibility of managing patients’ airways as they were being anaesthetised in theatre and also during several emergency calls to HDU. I greatly improved my technique of bag-valve-mask ventilation, and insertion of laryngeal mask airways and endotracheal tubes. This teaching and experience of performing these practical procedures gives me greatly increased confidence for when I will start my first job as a foundation doctor next year.

Teaching with Perth Medical students and SimMan
During the first two weeks of the placement there were five other medical students from Notre Dame University in Perth attached to the Anaesthetic Department for teaching in their final year. I enjoyed attending their tutorials which supplemented what I had already been taught on my fourth year Anaesthetic placement in Dundee. I received excellent teaching on managing intravenous fluids, pain and post-operative nausea and vomiting. This also gave me the opportunity to see more patients on the surgical wards and learn more about their management in the post-operative period.

I also enjoyed attending the teaching sessions with SimMan, a simulated patient controlled through a computer programme. It was a new and rewarding experience working as part of a team with the other medical students managing the acute scenarios we were given, and I enjoyed being involved in similar teaching sessions with the anaesthetic trainees.

Acute pain ward rounds and HDU/ICU
I enjoyed spending time on acute pain ward rounds which were run by a consultant anaesthetist and acute pain nurse every morning. They helped me gain a better understanding of the use of multimodal analgesia on the ward. I was surprised at how similar the practice of medicine is on the
other side of the world, but it was interesting comparing the use of analgesics in Perth and Dundee, especially in relation to the cost consideration of medications which appears to have a bigger role in Scotland when choosing what medications to prescribe.

**Anaesthetic Pre-Assessment Clinic and smoking**

I enjoyed spending several mornings in the Anaesthetic Pre-Assessment Clinic at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth. I had the opportunity to have consultations with patients on my own and complete their Anaesthetic Pre-Assessment forms before being reviewed by the consultant anaesthetist.

Last year I carried out a study in the Anaesthetic Pre-Assessment Clinic at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee to assess the effectiveness of their smoking cessation referral system. It was interesting comparing this to the smoking cessation programmes available to smokers at the Pre-Assessment Clinic at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

In Ninewells Hospital, those who smoke are given advice to reduce/quit smoking prior to surgery by the Anaesthetic PAC nurses along with the provision of information leaflets. All smokers are given the option of being referred to a smoking cessation programme run by pharmacists outwith the auspices of the Anaesthetic PAC, either in a local pharmacy or general practice.

In contrast, no referral system to a smoking cessation programme exists from the Pre-Assessment Clinic at Sir Charles Gairdner. At Sir Charles Gairdner, if the patient shows interest in receiving help to stop smoking, the anaesthetist or nurse can provide the patient with the contact details of a telephone service called Quitline. The Quitline advisors provide callers with advice on how to quit smoking, information on pharmacological options available for helping to quit, encouragement and strategies to help resist cigarette cravings. Information packs can also be ordered free of charge from their website or over the telephone.

I am very grateful to the AAGBI for their financial support to me in pursuing my elective attachment in Perth. The experience I gained will certainly be of great use to me in my initial years of foundation training and in whatever speciality area I continue in thereafter.