

Elective in Ghana Q&A



Figure 1: Author at Oral Health Education workshop, Cape Coast

Hello, my name is Yaa, and I'm currently in my final year of study at the University of Dundee. This summer was an incredible journey for me, thanks to the support from CDF. I had the privilege of embarking on a three-week dental elective at the Cape Coast Teaching Hospital (CCTH) in Ghana.

This placement was organised by Global Medical Projects. On weekdays, I worked closely with a great dental team, providing the community with a wide range of dental treatments. On weekends, I connected with the Ghanaian Christian Medical and Dental Fellowship (GCMDF), where we donated essentials including toothbrushing kits, and delivered crucial Oral Health Education to the community. In the moments when I wasn't working, I embraced the chance to explore the city of Cape Coast with fellow students, and reconnected with family in Ghana. This experience was nothing short of transformative, and I'm excited to bring back the knowledge and positivity I gained to my final year of studies and beyond.

Which was your favourite part of your elective and which part was the most challenging?

My favourite part of this elective was gaining profound insights into the practice of dentistry in Ghana. Despite the

challenges they faced in terms of limitations in resources, the dental team radiated passion and genuine care for the constant influx of patients. I found immense satisfaction in contributing by assisting with procedures, learning new skills, and connecting with patients at the hospital. Seeing patients who would come in presenting with pain leave with a smile on their faces was rewarding. I was also touched by the vibrant Ghanaian culture. Everywhere I went, people exuded optimism and warmth, whether it was in the bustling food markets or the spirited gatherings at church.

Furthermore, I enjoyed collaborating with the GCMDF students to deliver an oral health education workshop to children and parents. It was a joy highlighting the importance of oral health, elaborating on healthy oral habits, and providing oral hygiene tools – toothbrushes and toothpaste.

However, it was eye-opening to witness how limited resources in dentistry can profoundly affect the community's health. For instance, I had never encountered severe cases of Ludwig's angina in the UK, yet I saw four of such cases there. One case stood out to me where the patient required a tracheostomy due to obstructed airways. Witnessing such severe spread of odontogenic infections underscored the gaps in healthcare, including a recurrent underlying theme of the need for improved oral health education and addressing the challenges patients face in dentistry such as difficulty paying for dental care or accessing dental care. These experiences reinforced my belief that there is so much more that can be done to ensure access to quality dental care for everyone, regardless of the obstacles they may encounter. This inspired me to collaborate with the medical and dental students to provide oral health education.



Figure 2: Author with CCTH dental team



Figure 3: Author at Cape Coast beach

What did you learn about yourself while you were there?

This trip taught me that when faced with challenges, I must lean on God. Even though I am from Ghana, I hadn't visited the country for over a decade. This elective presented an opportunity to see a different side of Ghana and make a positive impact in the community through dentistry and faith. This trip reinforced my passion for dentistry and my vision to help provide avenues for others to improve their oral health. I saw that in Ghana, not everyone has the same access to dental care, and that inspired me to want to contribute positively.

What did you learn about God?

Being in Ghana served as a continuous reminder of the goodness of God. Ghana is predominantly a Christian country, and the people there openly express their faith in God. Everywhere I turned, there were signs proclaiming God's presence, such as businesses with names like "God's Grace Salon" or slogans at the back of taxis saying, "God is great." One Bible scripture that captures this sentiment is Matthew 10:29-31, which says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." This scripture beautifully illustrates the idea that God cares for each and every soul on this Earth, just as He watches over even the smallest creatures like sparrows. It's a

powerful reminder of His omnipresent love and care.

In essence, Ghana served as a profound reminder that God's presence is ever-present and that His blessings are abundant. God paved the way for me to be a vessel of His love and grace in the lives of others. As Psalm 34:1 encourages us to do, "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips."



Figure 4: Author at Kakum Canopy Walk

What is one thing you want to remember from your elective?

Although this elective held some challenging aspects, I want to treasure how wonderfully uplifting this experience was for me. It was heartwarming to see

how selflessly the dental team at CCTH cared for the community's oral health, and it inspired me to contribute by educating others about the importance of oral health.

One of the most uplifting parts of my experience was visiting Cape Coast School for the Deaf and Blind with the GCMDF. We donated essentials including toothbrushing kits, explored the life of Jesus and the gospel message, and shared moments of praise and worship. It reminded me of this verse: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6). Seeing the students worship God with all their hearts in all their abilities, showed me the boundless nature of praise.

Moreover, the simple pleasures of lounging on the beach, feeling the warmth of the sun and savouring delicious food were incredibly enjoyable. In the end, this experience was very positive, and I am grateful.

How can we pray for the place where you did your elective?

Ghana is a place where people are usually happy and have strong faith in God. But there's a big problem, especially when it comes to the government, finances and resources. Many young people in Ghana are worried about their future because there aren't enough jobs, and many are leaving the country. I talked to some students my age, and they told me how anxious they feel because they can't see things getting better. This economic stress doesn't only affect the people; it also impacts things like healthcare, including dentistry. Therefore, please pray that Ghana's love for God stays strong. Their faith has helped them through tough times, and we hope it continues to do so. Pray for God to provide ways to inspire and give hope to the people, especially the youth. It's essential that they have reasons to believe in a better future. Pray that opportunities for education, jobs, and good leaders arise, so the young people can see a brighter tomorrow.

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