

Elective Opportunities in Lebanon

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Unbeknown to many, Lebanon is the mother of Europe. Legend has it that many, many centuries ago, Europa, the daughter of the king of Tyre (a city in the South of Lebanon) was carried away by Zeus who appeared to her in the form of a bull, and with her he scoured the continent that now bears her name.





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Stroke Prevention in Patients with
Atrial Fibrillation

Should Society Take Precedence Over Individuals and Do
Scientists Need More Autonomy In Our Modern NHS?

Abstracts from the International Academic & Research Conference

Follow-up Chest X-ray Following
Regression of Community Acquired Pneumonia

An Introduction to Cardiothoracic Surgery

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Elective Opportunities in Lebanon

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Lebanon: Historical Background

Unknown to many, Lebanon is the mother of Europe. Legend has it that many, many centuries ago, Europa, the daughter of the king of Tyre (a city in the South of Lebanon) was carried away by Zeus who appeared to her in the form of a bull, and with her he scoured the continent that now bears her name¹.

Lebanon is famed for being a Holy Land, for the Gospels tell us that Christ came to Tyre and Sidon, preached there and performed many miracles. According to scripture, Jesus performed his first public miracle in the Lebanon, converting water into wine¹. In 2012, Pope Benedict visited the Lebanon which is home to a considerable Christian population.

Lebanon: a Tourist's Paradise

Lebanon was and remains renowned for boasting a spectacular opulence. You can go skiing down the convoluted slopes of the snow capped summits in *Fareiya*, or you can bask in the glory of our irresistible beaches on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. Perhaps you would like to sip on a freshly prepared cocktail of fruit juices whilst perched on a chair on our illustrious promenades where the ancients would barter frankincense and silk with merchants from far and wide? Beirut is a melting pot, a mosaic of cultures from all four corners of the globe and a city of endless delight. It is a modern and thriving city for commerce and also a center for scholarship with universities and hospitals of international repute.

Lebanon is renowned for championing freedom of expression as evidenced in the following quote by the Columbia University Scholar Edward Said:

Everything seemed possible in Beirut, every kind of person, every idea and identity...

Indeed, our lands have produced some of the most mystic and romantic poets known to humankind.

Today Lebanon is bustling and boisterous with tourists eager to assimilate our heritage, a country that is home to one of the wonders of the world (the Jeita grotto), a nation that hosts the magnificent Roman ruins in all its majesty and grandeur (Baalbeck the city home to the world's largest Roman temple complex), a state that has a dazzling capital city. It should come as no surprise then that in 2009, the New York Times ranked Beirut the No. 1 travel destination worldwide due to its unique nightlife and hospitality².

The Lebanese Medical Students' International Committee (LeMSIC)

The Lebanese Medical Students' International Committee (LeMSIC) is an apolitical, non-religious, not-for-profit student-run organization that represents medical students in Lebanon. It is a full National Member Organization (NMO) of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)¹.

The IFMSA is an independent organization that represents medical students' associations, embracing more than 1,000,000 students in 101 countries worldwide. It was founded in May 1951 and operated by medical students for the purpose of serving them¹.

The IFMSA is officially recognized as a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) within the United Nations (UN), and is also recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the International Forum for medical students. Its mission statement is:

*...to offer future physicians a comprehensive introduction to global health issues, to develop culturally sensitive students of medicine intent on influencing the transnational inequalities that shape the health of our planet...*¹

LeMSIC was founded in the 1960s by proactive medical students enrolled in the American University of Beirut. Unfortunately, with the onset of the Lebanese civil war, all the committees' activities ceased. They were reactivated in 1997, with the launching of the Exchange Program¹.

LeMSIC is recognized both nationally and internationally, and has expanded to embrace more than 300 medical students in its various standing committees¹.

Aims and Scope of LeMSIC

The primary purpose of the elective scheme in Lebanon is to provide medics with an insight into the provision of healthcare services in a developing nation in the Mediterranean region. For example, with the provision of healthcare being free at the point of delivery in the UK and very much a private enterprise in the Lebanon, an elective in Lebanon enables UK medical students to compare and contrast the disparate healthcare systems (i.e. universal healthcare vs private healthcare).

Lebanon has been politically stable for the past six years, even at present whilst insurrections and uprisings are rife in the Arab world. Yet the ramifications of the Lebanon-Israel wars (one of which was dubbed, '*The Grapes of Wrath*' after John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize winning novel) and the exodus of Palestinians into Lebanon since the 14th of May 1948 when Israel declared sovereignty allows medics on the elective scheme in Lebanon to learn more about the far-reaching effects of conflict and disaster, and also about humanitarian efforts under the auspices of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations such as Medical Aid for Palestinians and *Medicine sans Frontiers*.

With the vast majority of clinicians proficient in Arabic, French and English, prospective students needn't be concerned about any language barriers amongst the healthcare personnel (Lebanon was once a French colony and hence spoken French is ubiquitous in Beirut).

Exchange Conditions of LeMSIC

NB: The following information is by no means exhaustive. The author recommends that readers use this article for reference only. For a complete guide on the application process please visit the website:

<http://www.lemsic.org/files/LeMSIC%20Exchange%20Conditions.pdf>

Students who are interested in conducting placements in Lebanon through LeMSIC should have commenced clinical training. English is the language of instruction and it is obligatory that applicants are proficient in this language. An English Language Certificate from the exchange student's university is required with all applications. If it transpires upon arrival that the student's capacity to converse and comprehend English is mediocre at best, the student will be refused. Clerkships are for one month duration (calendar month). Exceptions are dependent upon availability. LeMSIC expect students on the scheme to proactively participate in departmental activities³.

Exchange students are not covered by malpractice insurance in Lebanese hospitals. Thus, they are mainly observers. They are, however, required to attend and actively participate in all ward rounds, bedside teaching, conferences, and case discussions. They are also allowed to examine patients under supervision. Exchange students are required to attend a minimum of 6 hours per day, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays³.

The specialties that are available to exchange students are listed below:

1. Anesthesiology
2. ENT-Head and Neck Surgery
3. Family Medicine (for final year medical students)
4. Internal Medicine:
 - a. Cardiology (for final year medical students)
 - b. Endocrinology
 - c. Gastroenterology
 - d. Hematology/Oncology
 - e. Infectious Diseases
 - f. Nephrology/Hypertension
 - g. Pulmonary Medicine
 - h. Rheumatology/Geriatrics
 - i. Neurology
5. Obstetrics and Gynecology
6. Ophthalmology
7. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
8. Pediatrics
9. Surgery
 - a. General Surgery
 - b. Vascular Surgery
 - c. Paediatric Surgery
 - d. Orthopaedic Surgery
 - e. Plastic Surgery
 - f. Urology
 - g. Cardio-thoracic Surgery and Cardiac Supportive Unit

Clinical placements through LeMSiC are available only via the American University of Beirut Medical Centre. An alternative elective scheme AESOP offers electives in the capital of the South of Lebanon Sidon (see the article entitled AESOP). LeMSiC can provide students with placements throughout the year except for between May 1 and June 15³.

Each application must be presented at the March general assembly for July/August/September and at least 3 months prior to arrival for other months of the year. LeMSiC cannot guarantee acceptance for applications that do not meet these deadlines. The American University of Beirut application form is the most important document in LeMSiC without which no student is accepted. The AUB application should be submitted with all the other documents during the March meeting with no exceptions. It should be signed and stamped by the dean's office of the student's original university. THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY. It can be accessed through the following link³:

<http://www.aub.edu.lb/academics/fm/visiting/fm-visiting.pdf>

A list of all the other necessary documents that must be submitted to LeMSiC is available at the following website:

<http://www.lemsic.org/files/LeMSiC%20Exchange%20Conditions.pdf>

It is an absolute must to have health insurance during one's stay in Lebanon. LeMSiC cannot accept responsibility for any student who does not have medical coverage. LeMSiC offers free board and lodging in furnished apartments in the vicinity of the hospital which is in the heart of West Beirut. Meals will be offered at the hospital's cafeteria on a daily basis (weekends included) three times a day³.

The Social Program is 100% free. It is, however, only available during the months of July and August. During the rest of the year, activities would be available and offered by local students on a personal basis. The social program consists of 4 full days of site-seeing and outdoor activities in addition to a large variety of recreational facilities, clubs and events on AUB campus³.

A visa can be acquired on arrival at the airport for students who are bearers of a passport of the following countries:

Australia, Canada, EU countries, Japan, South Korea, Switzerland and USA.

Students coming from other countries need to get their visas from the Lebanese Embassy in their country.

If needed and upon request LeMSiC can arrange to contact the Lebanese embassy to facilitate the visa procedure. A note to be made is that students who have an Israeli visa on their passport have to apply for the visa at the Lebanese Embassy in their country 2 months prior to the date of their clerkship³.

Conclusion

Students who have conducted their elective placements in the Lebanon have thoroughly enjoyed the experience (with one student stating in a feedback form that it was a life-changing experience). As well as gaining an insight into how the healthcare system in the Lebanon functions they also had the truly incredible opportunity to experience the fascinating culture of Lebanon. For more information please refer to the LeMSiC webpage:

http://www.web.lemsic.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=139

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