

Description

During my six-week elective placement at Oceanside Orthopaedics under the mentorship of upper limb specialist Dr Hans Lombard, I was immersed in the management of complex upper limb conditions across both clinic and theatre settings. I observed and participated in patient consultations, surgical procedures, and post-operative rehabilitation, while also gaining exposure to innovative tools like 3D-printed surgical guides.

Feelings

At the beginning, I felt some apprehension about the expectations in a high-performing private setting. However, I quickly found the environment supportive and rich in teaching. The encouragement to take initiative and engage deeply with each case boosted my confidence and reinforced my passion for orthopaedics.

Evaluation

The placement offered invaluable hands-on experience, particularly in performing upper limb examinations repeatedly across a variety of clinical presentations. This repetition allowed me to refine my technique and develop diagnostic confidence. I also gained practical insight into common surgeries, their indications, and post-operative care, including complications and recovery pathways. Observing the integration of 3D-printed tools into surgical planning was especially meaningful, as it connected directly to my own research interests, helping me envision how academic work can translate into clinical innovation. Importantly, I also saw how multidisciplinary care extended far beyond hospital walls, with patients relying on coordinated input from physiotherapists, radiologists, and GPs.

Analysis

The experience deepened my understanding of the full patient journey, from first presentation to surgical intervention and long-term recovery, and highlighted the importance of communication, teamwork, and system awareness. It also emphasized the value of maintaining a broad general medical knowledge base, even when pursuing a specialty. Additionally, contrasting the private and public health systems helped me appreciate where I can contribute meaningfully to both contexts.

Conclusion

This placement was instrumental in confirming my readiness to begin practice as a junior doctor. It strengthened my clinical skills, broadened my systems thinking, and affirmed my commitment to lifelong learning and interprofessional collaboration.

Action Plan

To strengthen my pathway toward a surgical career, I will prioritise orthopaedic placements when submitting my internship rotation preferences for 2026. I will attend at least two Australian Orthopaedic Association training events during 2026 to build connections and expand my practical knowledge. To support my future surgical training, I will sit and successfully complete the Generic Surgical Sciences Examination (GSSE) before the end of 2026. I will monitor my progress by setting quarterly check-ins to review rotation allocations, training event dates, and GSSE study milestones to ensure I remain on track. This plan will help me gain relevant experience, network within the field, and prepare for future surgical training requirements