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Clinical placements for medical students

Every medical student has to do clinical placements. Here you'll find some information on the different environments you'll experience and tips on how to get the most from them.

Where will I do my placements?

You'll experience a range of clinical placements while studying. They'll involve supervised practice in different settings including:

- teaching hospitals
- private hospitals and clinics
- community health centres
- specialist areas, such as early childhood services, or drug and alcohol services

Why are clinical placements important?

You might be wondering why you need to do these but they are crucial to your studies and future career as a doctor.

- they can help with your career decisions.
- you'll learn a number of skills including giving physical examinations, taking patient histories and patient communication
- you'll also learn about professionalism [1] in medicine
- you may get a chance to take part in a clinical audits [2] and teach more junior students what you've learned
- you'll get the opportunity to network with doctors and consultants and to ask them questions about their roles.

So what will I do on placement?

It really depends on the environment but some examples are below:

- consultant ward rounds – you can learn from the way consultants deal with patients, from their examination techniques and their clinical reasoning skills
- attending ward rounds with doctors in training – these will help you learn about the day-to-day tasks of working in a hospital
- ward rounds or clinics with specialist nurses or other healthcare professionals
- operating theatres – to observe surgical and anaesthetic procedures
- outpatient clinics with consultants or junior doctors

- GP surgeries and home visits – you will learn how GPs manage their time and make diagnoses, decide when to refer patients to specialists etc
- multidisciplinary team meetings – these may comprise nurses, social workers, physiotherapists
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Getting the most from clinical placement

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Here are some tips on getting the most from your clinical placements

- after each placement, think about what you have and haven't enjoyed, eg the pace and variety of work, contact with people, the setting (such as hospital or community), work-life balance etc
- the situations may be new to you and ward rounds, operating theatres etc can feel intimidating. Remember that it's normal to feel a bit anxious about some placements
- keep a log (eg e-portfolio) of your experiences so that you can refer back when making career decisions
- be proactive – ask questions, organise extra teaching sessions, ask other students what resources they've found useful and so on

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/medical-school/clinical-placements-medical-students>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/your-medical-training/medical-professionalism>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/medical-school/getting-involved-clinical-audits>