

ELECTIVE (SSC5c) REPORT (1200 words)

A report that addresses the above four objectives should be written below. Your Elective supervisor will assess this.

Describe the pattern of disease/illness of interest in the population with which you will be working and discuss this in the context of global health: What are the prevalent gynaecological conditions in San Ignacio, Belize? How do they differ from the commonest presentations seen in the UK?

San Ignacio is a rural part of Belize. I spent time in a women's community hospital, which was essentially made up of a small obstetric and gynaecology department including a ward, outpatient clinics and a small emergency department. Most of my time spent was in the obstetrics department.

Approximately a 3rd of the mothers presenting were HIV positive. There was a huge focus on public health awareness around the hospital with regards to contraception. This was very different to the way this is practised in the UK. In the UK we have well thought out posters and leaflets, whereas in San Ignacio, there were literally contraceptive options stuck on posters around the hospital and clinics. In fact, they advocate abstinence as the main contraceptive method especially with reference to transmission from mother to baby.

I did notice emphasis on campaigning for breastfeeding over formula milk despite the prevalence of HIV amongst mothers. I was under the impression that they would even refrain from handing out formula milk wherever possible. Again, this was part of the huge public health campaign around the hospital and clinics.

In addition to HIV, TB albeit not an obstetric or gynaecological condition, appeared to be rather prevalent.

Describe the pattern of health provision in relation to the country which you will be working and contrast this with other countries, or with the UK: How are the medical and surgical services (focussing on obstetric and gynaecology) organised in Belize? How do they differ from the service organisation in the NHS UK?

The community hospital only deals with stable obstetric and gynaecology patients. This includes outpatient reviews, and natural births only. There is also a small emergency department dealing with minor and stable major injuries.

As I was mainly involved in obstetrics, any women in labour which may be complicated or has the potential of being complicated or turn into a caesarian section, it's automatically transferred to a level 1 centre in Belmopan, Belize, for continuation/initiation of the appropriate care.

Health related objective: How medical/surgical emergencies are managed in a level 1 centre? are the resources limited?

The women's community hospital I was at was government funded. There appears to be private and government funded healthcare systems in Belize. The government funded is not entirely free but most people can afford.

This hospital has sufficient resources to carry out basic procedures, but anything complex as mentioned above, tends to go to Belmopan city where the level 1 centre is. I haven't been there myself to see, however from speaking to the team at the community hospital, I understand that there are adequate and appropriate resources to carry out major procedures and surgeries as required.

Personal/professional development goals.: What is the Belize culture like? To gain good insight into the diverse culture and get involved in outdoor activities when given the opportunity

Belize is an English speaking country in Central America. It is a Catholic country and people are rather religious. We arrived on Easter weekend, and were fortunate enough to be part of the celebrations carried out over the weekend. This included a fair in the centre of San Ignacio which brought the town together. People attend church every Sunday.

From working in the hospital, interestingly I noticed a huge emphasis on contraception despite most people being Catholic and as mentioned previously abstinence was advocated to some patients in some clinics.

San Ignacio is a fairly small town, but seemed to attract a lot of tourists and we came across some travellers who settled there for work. There were a lot of opportunities to get involved in the tourist activities such as ATM, tubing and seeing the ruins in the nearby towns, only a bus ride away.

We also had the chance to do some travelling around Belize, particularly around the Caribbean coast where we visited some of the most stunning Islands and did various activities there.

Belizean cuisine is delicious and predominantly consists of rice and beans, plantains and a side such as meat or vegetables. The fish and ceviche were also exquisite.