

ELECTIVE (SSC5c) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Objective 1: 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 general medical conditions in South Korea, and how do they differ from the UK?

Within the respiratory field, it was evident from the patients I was in contact with that the prevalent conditions are tuberculosis and bronchiectasis in South Korea. These two conditions are linked in that: as tuberculosis is so prevalent in this country, there is an increase in post-tuberculosis bronchiectasis seen also. I was in contact with many COPD patients as well and recently, there has been an increase in the prevalence of non-tuberculous mycobacterium infections in South Korea.

The prevalence of TB is higher than in the UK, but this is also a prevalent condition in East London. COPD is also prevalent in the UK. In contrast with the UK, I was not able to see any cystic fibrosis patients, and was informed that it is incredibly rare in the country. This can be explained by this genetic condition being most common among people of North European descent and least common in Asians and Africans.

Objective 2: 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 privatised general medical services organised and delivered in South Korea, and how does the deliverance differ with the UK?

Within the hospital, patients or their next of kin are asked to report to a part of the hospital dedicated to the financial aspect of their hospital care. In this section are machines which take patients through the payments, and hospital staff standing by to aid the process.

From my observations, it seems this type of service has its pros: it can allow patients to get the care they desire and be comfortable with, without feeling a certain amount of obligation towards a certain doctor and their care, or guilt when changing hospitals, etc. However, I do feel there are also cons to this: it can allow an attitude of buying medical care, and also perhaps allowing those with the financial means to get all the medical attention they desire, regardless of whether they need the care, and the opposite for those without financial means.

This is very different to the UK, where healthcare is mostly NHS-funded, except some procedures or practices that are private. There is no financial talk in the UK between patients and staff, and so it is interesting to see how normal among the patients and staff paying for healthcare is in South Korea.

Objective 3: Health related objective: What are the views of the South Korean patients on the healthcare system and its deliverance to them, and how do these differ with UK patients?

The patients in South Korea seem to have the attitude of finding themselves the best care, which in their general view is gained from university hospitals. Patients in hospitals seem to be happy to spend their money on their healthcare and are grateful to the hospital staff who give them their care. Patients seen by doctors are willing to listen to the medical advice given to them, and this is particularly the case in the university hospital I am in.

Something which is less seen in Korea and more in the UK is the discussion between the doctor and patient to reach a mutual decision regarding management. In Korea, there is seen a great amount of respect towards the doctor, and the patients are keen to follow what the doctor deems best for their care. In the UK, patients are helped to reach a decision for themselves with all the information they need to do so, so this is something that is very different between the two countries.

Objective 4: Personal/professional development goals.: To develop in my skills on reflection during and after experiences and to develop in my ability to transfer the reflection into writing.

During the placement, I was given a lot of experience to reflect upon and was able to take time to put this into writing. I have found the placement incredibly interesting as it has given me the chance to compare and contrast the two healthcare systems of South Korea and London.