

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Orthopaedics – Japan – April 2018

My elective at Jikei University Hospital offered a general insight into the field of orthopaedics and the healthcare system in Tokyo, Japan. The Jikei University Hospital was established as Japan's first charity hospital in 1882 with the spirit of "See the patient, and not the disease". It is now a large general hospital in the middle of Tokyo surrounded by governmental offices and financial areas. The hospital also has one of the biggest orthopaedic departments in the country, with over forty senior doctors in it.

In orthopaedics, a typical day would start at 7:30am with all the doctors being present for a meeting. For an hour, they will review patients and discuss new and interesting cases. After this, the teams either go straight to the operating theatres or go to the ward to see the patients and see how they are doing. Much of my time was spent in theatres. I was given the freedom to see all the different kinds of routine procedures that were being done within hand, knee, shoulder, foot surgery, etc. All of which were very similar procedures to back home. It was fantastic as I could explore multiple orthopaedic subspecialties.

During theatres, the surgeons always gave teaching to all the medical students before, during and after the surgery. They would show us x-rays and tell us the clinical indications for the surgery and consequences the patient may have if they do or do not have the surgery. They also discussed the exact surgical techniques and the importance of the equipment being used. At times, during the surgery, the surgeons would momentarily pause the procedure to show us the anatomy or the mechanics of the devices being used. I felt that there was great emphasis on teaching medical students here, which was great!

There were quite a few things that I found quite different compared to back home. One of which, was the number of doctors at a senior level that were at a surgery. During each surgery, there would be at least two consultants and two registrars, which is very different to back home, as at most, you would just have 2 surgeons, one consultant and one registrar. Even on the wards, I would always see teams of doctors working together. Whereas in England, most doctors work quite independently. Furthermore, the Japanese doctors seemed less stressed compared to doctors in the UK, even though, they have longer working hours. However, In Japan, I feel like there is more support from peers as they tend to work together quite a lot, thus, providing a better support network within doctors than the UK.

One of the things that I found quite surprising was that although Japan is a hierarchal country, with juniors always bowing their heads to their seniors and always respectfully calling them "sensei", which

means teacher, I did not feel a hierarchal system in theatres. In theatres, everyone was equal, there was no evidence of anyone being the main person. Assistants, nurses and doctors, each of their roles was just as important as the other. All members of staff spoke extremely politely and with utmost respect.

Furthermore, technology was used everywhere. There were no paper notes and healthcare professionals always had access to abundant iPads or computers. There was even a robot that made a weekly appearance to greet patients. Within surgery, at times, 3D reconstructions were used to see defects and fixes. The equipment used within the surgery was also different and better to what we have in the UK, even though, it is by the same company. This just showed me, the different products available for each market depending on cost, adaptability and availability.

Although Japan is well at the forefront of technological advances, it is still a traditional place, with technology and tradition co-existing. Japanese culture is different to elsewhere in the world, with hierarchy being evidenced in everyday life but in a respectful way and not a dominating manner. Elders and those with more experience such as senior doctors are treated with the utmost respect and their decisions are always considered. Japan is quite family oriented so at times, consultations in clinics would involve a range of family members along with the patient. The people of Japan are some of the loveliest and accommodating people I have ever met.

Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world and has some of the best health outcomes for various procedures and diseases. Japanese patients can choose who their healthcare providers will be, they can go to either the clinic or hospital and do not require referrals to see a specialist, unlike in the UK, where a general practitioner is usually the first point of contact for patients.

In Japan, there is universal healthcare coverage, everyone must be part of a public insurance programme via their employer or municipal government and pay a monthly premium depending on their income. Thus, allowing people to access government-approved medical procedures and medications at a lower cost, just around 30% of the cost, most of which, have been affordable for much of the population. There is also a limit on costs for those undergoing more expensive treatments depending on their income. Although, the government heavily controls the cost of medical services, it does not control the volume of services provided, thus, allowing patients to utilise the system more than necessary. It will be interesting to see how Japan reforms their healthcare for their upcoming challenges such as its aging population, high demand for services and increasing expenditures.

I have learnt a lot about orthopaedics and Japan during my time at Jikei. I am thankful to Jikei for accepting me on to this elective programme. I am also immensely grateful to my supervisors Ikeda Sensei and Marumo Sensei for all the teaching and support that they have provided me as well as, all the other healthcare professionals and students that helped me during my time here. Thank you very much for a magical experience!