

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) 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 variety of conditions with which patients present to event first aid providers, and compare this to the variety of conditions with which patients present to A&E.

During my time with St John Ambulance, I encountered patients presenting with a number of different conditions. These included sunburn and blisters at a country fair, drug overdose at a concert, and a myocardial infarction at a charity run. This shows that there is a very broad spectrum of conditions that patients present to first aid services with. The main difference between the NHS services and the first aid services is that the NHS has to deal with monitoring of chronic conditions as well. However, if you compare the St John patient load to the patient load of a minor injuries unit in an A&E department, it tends to overlap quite closely. During my time, I saw many muscular injuries, and minor conditions. However, we also saw some people who would have ended up going to majors or resus as well. With a first aid provider, the people who would be ill enough to present to A&E, would get sent to A&E anyway. However, the patients who would present to their minor injuries unit are usually seen to fully by the first aid team, and therefore would not now present to A&E. Therefore, in summary, the variety of conditions with which patients present to event first aid providers is similar in mix to those with which they present to A&E, although the number of the critical patients presenting to a first aid station is lower, as they are serving a smaller catchment area than an A&E department.

Objective 2

- Describe the variety of services provided by St John in the UK and compare them to those provided by Johanniter - the German arm of the Order of St John

St John provide more services than the event first aid for which they are known. In England, in addition to the well-known volunteer first aid posts and stations which are often to be seen at events, St John have many other roles. They provide a patient transport service for certain NHS trusts. They also even sometimes provide ambulances and the paramedics to staff them, to help shore up the NHS ambulance trusts in times of shortage. St John also run a care home in England. As well as the first aid and care services they provide directly to patients, St John have a major focus on training. They train their volunteers, but they also provide first aid courses to anyone who is interested, offer first aid at work qualifications and so on. This is because, to paraphrase, their mission statement says that no-one should suffer for the lack of first aid provision. Training is therefore central to the services provided by St John. In England, St John also provide wellbeing and support to their members, through a comprehensive well-being portal, offering everything from counselling to gym membership discounts. In the UK, St John provide a wide range of different services to the public and their own members. However, Die Johanniter, the German arm of the Order of St John, is an even wider ranging and more all-encompassing organisation. The first main difference is that Die Johanniter, along with the Red Cross (Rote Kreuz) actually provide all of the emergency medicine prehospital care to their populations in Germany. They fill the niche of the UK ambulance services such as LAS, with highly trained, paid paramedics. Die Johanniter also provide emergency doctors, who go out to any critically ill patients

before they can be brought into A+E, much like the UK NHS doctor cars. As well as this large and well established ambulance service, Die Johanniter also provide, jointly with the Red Cross, home carers, the district nursing service, meals on wheels, a befriending service, social workers, a volunteer fleet for event first aid cover, care homes, nurseries and schools, soup kitchens and homeless shelters, the natural disaster response service, the Bavarian terrorism response service, major incident response services, mountain rescue services, river rescue services, training, whole hospitals... The list goes on and on! In Germany, the combination of Die Johanniter and the Rote Kreuz manages to provide all of the services provided by the NHS and the UK Order of St John, and much more!

Objective 3

- What is the potential impact of charitably provided first aid services?

St John firmly believes that making first aid available to the public is an important public service. It argues that it saves lives by providing immediate CPR in situ and before the emergency NHS services arrive. This may well be true, but my observation suggests that it also provides a less acute, but none the less valuable service to the public.

St John deals effectively, immediately and in-situ with smaller issues, such as blisters and splinters and twisted ankles, meaning that those patients do not go on to present at NHS services. It also deals with issues that patients may have had, or been concerned about, for a while, but don't want to discuss with their local GP or pharmacist. The ease and immediacy of access to St John services suits some patients better than making appointments or sitting in waiting rooms.

The general approach of the volunteers who provide St John first aid services is very welcoming and personal. That can be in contrast to the way patients can be made to feel when attending stretched NHS services, where they report being "made to feel a nuisance" or feeling "unwelcome".

The local and community-based nature of St John services appears to offer engagement and ownership to its personnel, which can often lead to them going the extra mile for the organization and the patients for whom they care.

Overall, charitably provided first aid services can reduce the demand for GP appointments and minor injury units, but will be unlikely to reduce the demand for majors or resus rooms in the A&E setting, as patients this critically ill are likely to be too complex for volunteer first aiders to manage.

Objective 4

- To become more competent and confident in providing pre-hospital care in the community.

During my time with St John, I have been interacting with the public on a continuous basis. This has improved my communication skills and has helped me to become more comfortable serving them. It has also exposed me to a range of minor medical conditions, and I have therefore become more proficient in ministering to these injuries. Furthermore, during my time with St John Ambulance, I witnessed my first cardiac arrest, and was involved with the management of this patient until the helicopter arrived. Being exposed to this for the first time means that when, during my medical career or in the pre-hospital setting, when I encounter this again, I will be better prepared. Now that I know the reality of CPR on a patient in a field, I will be better able to respond to any demands for assistance that I may encounter whilst off duty, and should hopefully make CPR in a hospital, where there are better facilities and more experienced teams, less daunting for me. Overall, through my experience of

different patients with different conditions, in different settings, I have become more competent and confident in providing pre-hospital care in the community, and I hope that this will also extend to providing care in a hospital situation. I therefore believe that this elective period will have contributed towards my aim of becoming a well-rounded, holistic, doctor.