

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

I completed my elective at Newham University Hospital. It is located in the East End London and run by Barts Health NHS Trust. It is a general hospital which provides maternity and fertility services for its very diverse local population. It was a pleasure to undergo my elective here and found it a valuable experience, which I am sure will help me in my future career as a doctor.

During my elective I saw the wide variety of reproductive health conditions seen in the population of Newham. This ranged from male causes of infertility to female causes of infertility. For example, quite a few women I saw at Newham has polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), it was interesting to be able to take a detailed history under supervision of these women and then discuss the investigations and management options with the consultant. There is also a high prevalence of gestation diabetes in Newham, this is due in part to the large south Asian population in the area. South Asian women are up to six times as more likely to develop type 2 diabetes which is closely linked to gestational diabetes. Subfertility is something that affects men and women all across the world however in developed countries such as the UK, people have more options with regards to treatment such as IVF.

The UK is quite fortunate in that it has a fairly comprehensive service for expectant mothers as well as the aftercare for both the mother and the baby. Mothers are offered a wide variety of screening tests and investigations during their pregnancy. This is done to monitor the health of the mother and baby, as well as assessing the development of the baby. Tests can also identify the risk of baby having certain conditions such as down's syndrome. This allows the mother to make informed decisions about their pregnancy, including the difficult decision to terminate their pregnancy, a service which the hospital also provided. Women are also given a lot of choice about how they would like to deliver their baby, women can choose to have their baby on a labour ward, a midwife led birth centre which has birthing pools, and even in the own homes. Although the service is mainly midwife led, doctors are available if cases become complex. In the event of a home birth becoming complicated, women can be transferred to hospital by ambulance. The hospital even lends mothers birthing pools for use in their own homes. After the birth, midwives will visit mothers to provide support. This comprehensive service is provided for free to women who are ordinarily residents of England by the NHS. This compares favorably to less developed countries which may not even have this level of service available and will often charge for the services that they do provide. This disparity in services often leads to higher maternal mortality in poorer, less developed nations, however, worldwide this is improving.

I also found it interesting to see private services offered to women at the hospital as well as IVF services. IVF services are offered to women for free across the UK, however, this varies between different areas of the UK. Women may be offered a different number of free cycles of IVF based on where they live. Different areas may also have different criteria as well for who they offer IVF. It was interesting to see this disparity even within England.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is an illegal practice that is commonly found in certain Middle Eastern, African and Asian communities worldwide. It can cause a range of complications including complications with pregnancies. As Newham has a very diverse population with a high immigrant population, it is important for doctors to be aware of the risk of FGM in the communities that they serve. Doctors, as well as other medical staff and teachers are legally required to report cases of FGM to the police. Over 5000 cases of FGM were identified in the UK with just under a half of cases being reported in London. Despite this, the prevalence of FGM in the UK is relatively low especially in comparison to some countries such as Somalia in which over 90% of women have been victims of FGM. There are efforts to try and reduce the prevalence of FGM worldwide, however this may be difficult as it is ingrained in some cultures and countries may not have the resources to deal with it.

One of the things I particularly wanted to work on during my elective was my clinical skills. In particular I wanted to work on taking bloods and cannulation. This is because one of the most common jobs I will be doing as an F1 would be cannulating and taking bloods. Next year when I am busy on a ward, I do not want to be missing bloods and cannulas as it will slow me down. So I took the opportunity this elective to practice both of those skills as often as I could. Over the course of the elective I became far more comfortable in both those things, especially cannulation, which was something which I had not done successfully many times before this elective. I also developed other clinical skills such as history taking and performing examinations during my time. I think that I will be much more comfortable in doing all of those things next year when I am a foundation doctor.

Overall, I had an excellent time during my elective. Newham is a diverse population and I feel that its diversity enhances the educational experience at the hospital due to the variety of conditions and the variety of cultures you see at the hospital. There are challenges in its population that may not be present in other areas of England. I gained a greater insight into the field of obstetrics and gynecology. It was especially useful to be able to work on my clinical skills and interactions with patients. I feel the experience has made me more confident about working as an F1 next year and I would recommend this as an elective for future years.