

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Elective Report in Cardiothoracic Surgery

I undertook my surgical elective in the field of cardiothoracic surgery at Lam Wah Ee hospital, a centre for excellence in healthcare. The hospital has a large cardiac centre comprising of cardiology, cardiac electrophysiology and cardiothoracic surgery. It is a not-for-profit, charitable organization established in 1883. Lam Wah ee Hospital is based in Penang, an island northwest coast of Malaysia, where I had invaluable opportunities to shadow and learn from leading cardiac surgeons.

My first elective objective was to find out what public health initiatives has the government undertaken to improve health care in Malaysia. According to Ministry of Health in Malaysia, diseases of the circulatory system are the leading cause of mortality in hospitals accounting for 22.62% of all deaths and one of top ten causes of hospitalization. For this reason, there is great emphasis on public health awareness in Malaysia with focus on diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and smoking cessation. Health screening centres are established in both private and government funded hospitals to identify high risk patients to initiate primary and secondary prevention strategies. The screening programmes incorporates medical history taking, physical examination, blood analysis, ECG, exercise stress test, various imaging and, lifestyle and dietary advice, as an important means to improving health and wellbeing.

Also, there has been an increase in the number of community clinics, mobile health clinics and specialist doctors involved in educating patients about healthy lifestyle changes, increasing physical activities and improving diets in addition to providing follow-up appointment and secondary prevention medications.

On my surgical elective my second objective was to improve my communication skills with both patients and doctors. At Lam Wah Ee hospital most patients spoke English fluently and thus obtaining a full history was possible. However, in a small proportion of patients, particularly the elderly patients, there was a language barrier and in these cases I managed to successfully obtain a history and answer their questions about their illnesses by asking nurses to translate as well as utilizing images and drawing to explain medical conditions. I improved my communication skills with doctors and other healthcare professions by presenting surgical patients I clerked and discussing the cases in the multi-disciplinary meetings.

My third objective was to describe the commonest surgical procedures in cardiothoracic surgery in Malaysia with a comparison to the United Kingdom. The commonest surgical procedures in Malaysia

was coronary artery bypass, repair of valvular heart disease and resection of lung in lung cancer patients, which I noticed was similar in the UK.

My final objective was to compare surgery in Malaysia to United Kingdom. Due to the shortage of surgeons in Malaysia, surgeons tend to operate across surgical specialties. However in the UK surgeons tend to subspecialise in their surgical career. The working environment in Malaysia I found to be more hectic with longer hours and higher number of patients seen by my surgeons compared to UK. This also meant that doctors will have a greater clinical experience managing a wide range of conditions.

The second main difference I observed was that in the UK patients are more knowledgeable about their conditions and surgical procedures planned, which is different in Lam Wah Ee hospital with most patients not having a good understanding of their conditions or why intervention in the form of medication or surgery is required. Therefore, an important step to improve this is through better patient education by doctors and other healthcare professions involved in their medical care. Another difference I noticed was the role of nurses in surgery, where typically in Malaysia a single surgeon will perform the operation with specialised nurses assisting with operation. This is different in UK as theatre nurses mainly assist with surgical equipments and instruments.

In conclusion, my elective was an amazing opportunity for me to travel abroad and experience surgery in a different healthcare setting and develop my surgical career portfolio. I would like to thank the surgical and nursing staffs for the wonderful experience I have gained on my elective.

Reference:

Ministry of Health Malaysia. Health Facts 2017. Available online at: <http://www.moh.gov.my/images/gallery/publications/HEALTH%20FACTS%202017.pdf>. Accessed online [01/06/18]