

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

In the U.K., one must admit that we all love moaning about the National Health Service (NHS). These include the incredibly shorthanded hospital staffs, the appalling waiting times, and the general practitioners (GP) essentially “forcing” patients out of the surgery after a few minutes of quick consultation. It is a well-known fact that Britain’s free healthcare system is enormously underfunded and unsupported. Nonetheless, the NHS still managed to maintain its high standards in healthcare amongst other parts of the world. Give someone something for nothing, they will still wonder why they’re not getting more at that price, rather than recognising what’s given as a privilege and exception. The NHS is just like a mother to U.K. citizens. Like all great moms, she is always there when we need her. She’s kind, caring and protective. Sometimes, her grumpy children also take her for granted, don’t appreciate the hard work she does for her children. At times, we even go completely over the top with criticism, often hurting her feelings. Yes, she is far from perfect, but she is there all the time regardless of her children’s social standing, financial circumstances or previous health conditions. With the generosity of the U.K. welfare and social support system, I believe the British is still utterly grateful for the culture of entitlement to healthcare.

On the contrary, in the U.S., healthcare is all privatised. Indeed, we did hear a lot of cons with the system in the U.S. Some of them have to pay out-of-pocket for their medications, as their insurance companies failed to cover some, if any, of their expensive consultation fees and medications. Due to these costly healthcare expenses, some patients may not even seek medical help for their conditions, and rather use the money to help them survive on the daily. Whilst there’s a need to reduce the costs and improve healthcare to make it more accessible to the deprived, it’s undeniable that this system does have its benefits. Waiting times are much better when compared to the U.K. If there comes a life or death situation, foreigners who are relatively rich may even choose to go to the USA when things are dire. Here, you have the opportunity to receive care in a well-equipped hospital and see one of the top-notched doctors quickly. Furthermore, the U.S. is the global leader in medical research, where the most advanced medical technology could be found in the U.S. Of course, these technologies are often very expensive. Cost of care is high in the U.S. and these are very real problems. However, due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, all Americans are required to have medical coverage, provided to them at an affordable price.

Society is essentially a framework shaped by healthcare, social roles, politics and religious beliefs. There’s always an ongoing debate as to whether politics should interfere with healthcare. When mentioning politics, some people will think of issues related to the government and politicians, corruptions and policies being implemented, etc. In fact, politics drive the regulation of public affairs according to all aspects of society, including physical, social, economic, political, environmental and cultural. Politics is here to help our society to be equal, just, secure and peaceful. However, on the other side, as every party has their own agenda on every issue, politics has also become a tool to help certain parties to selfishly fight for their own interests at the expense of others’ happiness. Politics is crucial in a society. Without politics, a society can never learn from history and improve on the flaws of current

policies. There are always two sides to everything. One must bear in mind that there's never a "perfect" solution in politics, only better. It may be the best solution for today, nonetheless, it may also be the biggest flaw for tomorrow. Although it may seem that when politics do intervene with healthcare, the standard of care for patients may not reach its full potential. However, a sustainable society will not exist without politics. Doctors are trained to take up the role of curing patients, to try their very best to help relieve their pain. The top priority of doctors should be the benefit of patients, to provide a service to the public through diagnosing and giving treatment of illness and disease. Life is not perfect in a sense that things won't just work out the same way every time. Politics acts more like guidance for the public to maintain a community that is fair and balanced. When we have difficulties solving the problem, it is always the best thing to refer back to the principles that were once stated. This does not mean the current policies implemented are always right. Constant reviews, discussions and amendments should be made to further improve our society, leading to a broader and freer society.

I am utterly grateful for the opportunity to carry out my elective for 4 weeks in the New York Presbyterian Hospital - Columbia University. During my attachment with the electrophysiology (EP) team, I have noticed the prevalent health conditions seen in the U.S. are very similar to those in the U.K. Like any developed countries around the globe, as food become more accessible, technology and transportation getting more convenient, this might play a crucial role in promoting a more sedentary lifestyle. Overweight/obesity is in fact the most prevalent chronic condition in the US, where there's nearly 60% of people being placed in the category of overweight/obese. Other prevalent chronic conditions in the US include metabolic syndrome, coronary artery disease, myocardial infarction, arrhythmias, heart failure etc. I sure did learn a lot in this elective by seeing a range of assessments and procedures. Referrals for pacemaker interrogations and EP consults, together with procedures like pacemaker/ defibrillators insertion/cardiac resynchronization therapy took place on a daily basis.

Moreover, I am lucky enough to be warmly welcomed by different teams in the cardiology department. I was granted the opportunity to observe the coronary care unit ward round, cardiothoracic intensive care unit ward round and even procedures in the cath lab. If asked to use 3 words to describe my experience, it is definitely exceptional, fun and memorable. Doctors here could not have been friendlier. I truly feel that I was treated as a member of the team. Despite the huge workload that doctors are facing everyday, they are always more than willing to teach you about medicine. For this, I cannot be more thankful.

Despite differences in disease profile, medical practices, healthcare system and cultural differences, the practice of medicine and healthcare is one. Healthcare professionals across the globe uphold the same belief of saving and respecting lives. I cannot be grateful enough for the golden opportunity to attach in the New York Presbyterian Hospital - Columbia University. Other than gaining medical knowledge, I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the U.S. with incredible new outlooks, customs and activities. This placement sure did open doors for me to explore different medical practices in the greater world, and the portal to experience more than what I am trained under the NHS system over the last 5 years.