

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

We would like to thank Dr Zhang, Dr Han, and Dr Cui Miao for their amazing hospitality during this period. It was indeed an eye-opening experience during the elective at Shanghai Putuo hospital.

The learning objectives we set out before the elective were to gain a better understanding of the China healthcare system and to observe the use of complementary medicine in the approach to medical problems.

Medicine in Shanghai focuses mostly on an integration between western medicine and TCM, with primary emphasis on TCM methods of treatment. During the elective, we were exposed to a wide variety of specialties within the hospital, most of which were TCM-oriented. This included Tui-na (massage), Zhen-jiu (acupuncture), Ai-jiu (moxibustion), herbal remedies, gastroenterology clinics, general clinics, and spending some time in the pharmacy. We also attended some lectures on pathology with our post-graduate doctor Dr Cui Miao, held in a separate hospital. I found that many of the doctors were well-trained in the principles of both western medicine and TCM. Dr Zhang specializes in gastroenterology, mostly seeing patients in clinic and doing endoscopy procedures. In the clinical approach, the doctors here will consider diseases first from the western perspective, using western diagnostic methods such as blood tests, imaging, and endoscopy. The TCM process of clinical examination mainly involves pulse examination and tongue examination. Putting all the findings together, they will come up with a holistic management plan for the patient, which usually includes a herbal formula, western medicine, and comprehensive advice about diet and lifestyle. The principles of TCM can sometimes sound very esoteric and hence it is often considered a form of alternative therapy in the western world. While acupuncture is becoming more and more accepted in the western world as an effective form of alternative therapy, herbal therapy is still not widely accepted as a therapeutic method. TCM has a very deeply rooted set of core principles that focus on the flow of energy, balance of energy, and holistic well-being in patients. The foundations are based on concepts of Yin and Yang, Qi and Xue, Wu Zang Liu Fu. The literature is also very vast with a history of 3000 years, and it is not something that can be fully grasped within the span of a few weeks. One can see how it can be seen as a very esoteric field. However, the methods that we observed were clearly effective. It is clear after this invaluable experience that western medicine and TCM are not mutually exclusive, but instead can be used to complement each other to achieve a more holistic outcome for the patient.

From what we've seen so far, many of the conditions that present in the UK also present here in similar ways. Gastric cancer rates are higher here than in other parts of the world, mostly because of a diet high in fermented food. Many of the patients that presented to the TCM clinics were patients who already tried western medicine but still didn't manage to get a satisfactory outcome. Others were patients who presented with uncommon sets of symptoms that didn't fit into western diagnostic profiles. Using a whole new approach to pathology, many of these patients actually manage to get better outcomes by holistic therapy using herbs, acupuncture and moxibustion.