

ELECTIVE (SSC5a) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Elective Title: The Field of Psychiatry

Mental illness is a global problem, affecting just over 300 million individuals worldwide, with approximately 4% of the population suffering from depression. (1) Specific groups of individuals such as those living in poverty are disproportionately affected, and in the context of East London, where there are higher levels of deprivation, the prevalence of mental health conditions is twice as high as other areas of London. (2) According to a study on Mental Health in East London, the most common mental health conditions reported in the area are depression and anxiety, which are often treated at a primary care level. There seemed to be a positive correlation with socioeconomic deprivation and age, whereby the older the patient and the lower the standard of living, the greater the likelihood that patients had such conditions. In addition to this, mental health conditions were more common amongst females as well as those with low household incomes. The study noted that patients with poor mental health also had a reduction in physical health including risky health behaviours; the most common risky behaviour being smoking. (3) According to 'Better care and wellbeing in East London', mental health service users in East London are approximately three times more likely to die from cancer or heart and lung related health conditions, as compared to the rest of the population. (4) In the context of global health, mental health conditions are one of the main causes of overall disease burden globally, with depression being the second most common cause of disability worldwide, as well as a major contributing factor to heart related problems. (5)

Within east London there are many mental health services offered to patients, with various goals of encouraging patients to achieve their goals, increase their level of activity and fitness through physical activities, interact with others and help individuals get into education. There is also a service under the mental health services called 'Mums Matter' to help mothers with their journey and provide emotional and mental support throughout. The 'Mind' organisation within Tower Hamlets and Newham provides a service which encompasses all of these and has been running successfully for the past five years. (6) Within London, services aiming to achieve the same outcomes are also provided, including talking therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Within the NHS, the talking therapy services are also known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. Within the NHS, 'Every Mind matters' is an online website that provides advice and tips to help with mental health, including covid related wellbeing such as methods for coping with 'lond covid'. (7)

There are many public health interventions related to mental health in the UK, one of which include parenting programmes to reduce the likelihood of children developing conduct disorder (a condition where behaviours deemed 'antisocial' interfere with a person's ability to lead a normal life). This could prove beneficial in the long run from an economical perspective as there would then be a reduction in the usage of mental health services as well as social care, and reduced crime rates in the long run. In addition to this, school based anti-bullying interventions are necessary for the wellbeing of children, especially as bullying can lead to poor mental as well as physical health, poor education, and subsequently lower long-term earnings. A study found that such programmes for children aged eleven to sixteen cost under £20 per student annually, which can result in an increase in lifetime earnings of almost £1080 per student. (8)

In terms of the elective itself, I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and I managed to gain several communication skills especially when shadowing Dr Nasreen. Having the opportunity to sit with her in CAMHS and talk to children of various ages as well as their parents gave me insight into how to communicate appropriately for different age groups and also emphasised to me the importance of speaking in a way that reassures the parent (and the child). Unlike many other specialities within Medicine, I noticed that taking a thorough history from patients in the psychiatric department can easily take much more time, including having to take a collateral history from partners as well as family and friends of the patients. Prior to starting the placement I was always interested in knowing how you'd approach the topic of confidentiality with the patient, given that there are situations in which breaking the patient confidentiality may be needed for example if the patient's life is in danger. Fortunately I know now how this could be done in a way that doesn't result in breaking the trust completely, and I learnt that effective communication is key in order to achieve this.

References:

- (1) <https://www.healthpovertyaction.org/news-events/mental-health-world-health-day-2017/#:~:text=More%20than%20300%20million%20people,some%20time%20in%20their%20lives.>
- (2) <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/archive/news/ioppn/records/2012/december/selcoh-study>
- (3) <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Public-Health/JSNA/Mental-Health-in-East-London-and-the-City-JSNA-2011.pdf>
- (4) <https://democracy.cityoflondon.gov.uk/documents/s105406/Item%207%20-%20Appendix%201%20-ELHCP-better-care-and-wellbeing-in-east-London.pdf>
- (5) <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-uk-and-worldwide>
- (6) <https://www.mithn.org.uk/about-us/our-reports/>
- (7) <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
- (8) http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/32311/1/Knapp_et_al__MHPP_The_Economic_Case.pdf