

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Reflection on Medical Elective Placement in Oman

I have spent four weeks in Oman, specifically the county of Al Seeb, where I spent time in the Cardiology department in the famous Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. I also spent time exploring the country, famous for its vibrant and comforting culture, both present in its extremely kind people and its amazing nature and tourism spots.

Prevalence of Cardiac Diseases in Oman (Explore the prevalence of cardiac diseases in the population of Oman, and discuss this in the context of the global health of the country)

During my time in Oman, I observed that cardiac diseases are a significant health concern in the population and are widely present. The prevalence of conditions such as ischemic heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes-related cardiac issues is notably high. This can be attributed to several factors, including dietary habits, genetic predisposition, and lifestyle choices. For instance, the traditional Omani diet, rich in fats and sugars, combined with a sedentary lifestyle, contributes to the rising incidence of obesity and related cardiac conditions. Globally, the prevalence of cardiac diseases in Oman mirrors trends seen in many other nations, where rapid urbanization and lifestyle have led to an increase in non-communicable diseases, including cardiac diseases. Comparing this with global health statistics, Oman faces similar challenges to countries undergoing similar socio-economic transitions, indicating a need for targeted public health interventions.

Health System Provision in Oman vs. the UK (Describe the pattern of system health provision in Oman and compare this with the UK. Establish the differences between UK guidelines and guidelines in Oman in relation to cardiac treatments)

The health system in Oman is predominantly public and free at the point of delivery, funded by the government. Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, where I spent most of my elective, is a prime example of the advanced healthcare facilities available. The Omani health system is comprehensive and provides extensive coverage, although there are challenges related to resource allocation and workforce distribution, especially in rural areas. On my visit to some of the rural areas, I often did wonder how people usually have access to frequent healthcare of secondary services. In contrast, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) also provides free healthcare at the point of use, but it is a much larger and more complex system, which comes with different challenges such as long waiting times and budget constraints, which I did not find observable in Oman. One notable difference is in the guidelines for cardiac treatments. In Oman, while guidelines are largely influenced by international standards such as those from the American Heart Association, there are adaptations to fit the local context. During the teaching sessions and discussions of patient cases, I would see how the consultant's recommending guidelines used in America for example, according to the latest research from their own expertise. The UK, on the other hand, follows NICE guidelines which are specifically tailored to the UK population and healthcare structure, and rarely stream off this. This difference in guidelines affects the approach to treatment and patient management.

General Patient Health and Access to Healthcare in Oman (Describe the general patient health of citizens of Oman and their access to medical healthcare facilities).

The general health of citizens in Oman is relatively good, with a high life expectancy and low infant mortality rates according to my research. However, there are disparities in access to healthcare facilities, particularly in remote and rural areas, which I have observed. This may be due to the huge geographical area of the country and a smaller population relatively. During my placement, I noticed that urban areas like Al Seeb and Muscat have excellent healthcare infrastructure, but rural areas face challenges in terms of accessibility and availability of specialised care. Access to healthcare is largely facilitated by government initiatives, but there is a growing need for private sector involvement to bridge gaps, which I have noticed when speaking to the public, as some of them often prefer the private service. Additionally, public health education and preventive care are areas that require more attention to improve overall health outcomes, as previously mentioned due to the lifestyle factors that contribute to many

diseases.

Exposure to Interventional Cardiology (Get exposure to Interventional Cardiology as it is a field I am interested in)

My interest in interventional cardiology was a significant factor in choosing my elective placement in Oman. The team of excellent specialists in Interventional Cardiology in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital was one of the highlights of my time. Overall, Cardiology department at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital provided ample opportunities to observe and engage with cutting-edge interventional procedures. I had the chance to observe different stent placements, as well as TAVIs and other minimally invasive procedures that are critical in the management of coronary artery disease. I learnt the stages of a percutaneous coronary intervention, and I am able to now recognise the basics on the contrast radiological scan. This experience was invaluable, as it allowed me to understand the practical applications of theoretical knowledge gained during my studies. The differences in procedural protocols and the collaborative approach of the Omani healthcare professionals enriched my learning experience, reinforcing my passion for this field and providing insights into potential areas of research and improvement in interventional cardiology.

Conclusion

My four-week medical elective in Oman was an enriching experience that provided deep insights into the healthcare system, patient health, and the specific challenges faced in managing cardiac diseases. It was an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast healthcare provision between Oman and the UK, and to gain experience in interventional cardiology. The exposure to different medical practices and the cultural context has broadened my perspective and will undoubtedly influence my future medical career. Meeting an amazing population is an unforgettable experience, and experiencing the culture of a hidden gem of the Middle East will remain engraved in my memory.