

Elective report- Iram Shahid

Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia
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My objectives for 5 weeks elective were:

1. Study the healthcare system in Malaysia
2. How does it differ from NHS in UK
3. Understand the culture, lifestyle and attitudes of Malaysian people

1. Healthcare system in Malaysia

There is a two tier system of healthcare in Malaysia. Healthcare is divided into public and private healthcare which co exists together. Majority of the population rely on the public healthcare also called Universal healthcare system.

Universal healthcare (Public):

The government run universal health care supplies 75% of the total hospital beds and has 68% doctors of the healthcare. It consists of government hospitals and clinics including medical and dental clinics. This type of care is mostly free to the population although patients have to bear some of the costs of treatment and investigation. The infant mortality rate is 5 and is comparable to developed countries.

The demand is huge with government run hospitals catering to entire populations especially in rural areas. There are medical schools and universities in major cities like Kuala Lumpur which provide specialist care and entire range of facilities. There is often long patient queues especially in bigger hospitals as demand for healthcare is more than supply. There is also often a shortage of beds and sometimes lifesaving medicines in the government sector. Compounding to that there is shortage of staff in public sector in many areas including doctors. The government has made it compulsory for doctors to work for 3 years in public sector after graduation to increase the number of staff available.

The most common reason for hospital admissions are pregnancy related, respiratory illnesses and trauma.

Private sector

The private hospitals are mostly based in urban areas and cater to affordable population. There is a current trend for health tourism where the hospitals provide affordable healthcare for foreign tourists.

2. How it differs from NHS in UK

Being a developing country with a healthcare system much younger than NHS, Malaysian healthcare has its limitations. The doctor patient ratio is low compared to UK and so is the number of hospital beds per population. The government expenditure on healthcare is considerably low compared to UK with far less facilities compared to UK hospitals. But the healthcare model is good and moving in the right direction with healthcare indices improving over the years.

One notable difference is lack of a solid primary care system like GPs in UK. This has in turn put more stress on an already stretched government hospital system.

4. Malaysian culture and tourism

Malaysia has a diverse and rich culture with a multi ethnic population. Kuala Lumpur is a truly multi cultural and cosmopolitan city. The population in KL consists of 50% Malayan, 30% Chinese, 10% Indian and rest other ethnic origins. This gave me an insight into different cultures mixing together and living in harmony.

This is also reflected in the food in KL as there is a wide variety for your palate and I could taste ethnic Malayan, Chinese, Indian and continental cuisines. The people are friendly and there is a huge tourist presence in Kuala Lumpur.

The multi-ethnic population, rich heritage and natural beauty has propelled Malaysia to one of the most sought after tourist centres in the world. In Kuala Lumpur I had the chance to visit the famous Petronas twin towers, Batu caves with the temples, magnificent mosques, Cameron highland with the tea estates and a variety of malls and shopping centres catering to all kinds of tourists. They have a well developed metro rail system like the tube service in London and I found the public transportation reliable and efficient. One of the highlights of Kuala Lumpur was the forest conservation centre with jungle trekking and learning about the varied flora and Fiona from the knowledgeable guide who accompanied us.