

ELECTIVE (SSC5c) REPORT (1200 words)

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

GPs are constantly facing multiple pressures that they must alleviate on daily basis. These constitute issues which are both medical and surgical often under the spectre of a tightening NHS budget and thus limited resources. When addressing public health issues in particular, this is of significant importance as it often seen as an expendable speciality or area of concern. The local area serving this particular surgery is one which is similar to other areas of Essex; in that it has a diverse population with a multitude of ailments and public health concerns.

One can see that to target such a diverse group there needs to be a concerted effort amongst a wide array of healthcare professionals and that often a number of other GPs in the area with other surgeries under their guises must be utilized to meet this need. From these it was felt by myself that childhood vaccinations was a particular pertinent area of concern in this area and there I saw how it was being implemented through use of other professionals such as midwives and nurses. When comparing this to an area that is deprived of resources such as a developing country, this can be appreciated as a supernumerary issue as they may need lifesaving equipment such as first medical devices and drugs instead of mere public health initiatives.

The strategy that is largely used in areas such as Essex and London as a whole is one that utilizes the resources that are available. These include poster campaigns that encourage and remind parents or guardians that children need to be vaccinated. Or those elderly patients and those in at risk groups need influenza vaccinations. It can also be seen in radio campaigns that are sponsored by both local and national campaigns. It is evident that this approach is particularly useful in the setting of travel clinics which need to be recognised sources of reliable, accurate and up to date information. Many people attending these are often from backgrounds that are working class or emigrant and therefore they are the most vulnerable and reliant on external support and advice. The service is somewhat supported by local pharmacies that can provide advice on travel as well as prophylactic therapies that can be bought over the counter. Some of these however need referring back to the GP as they can only be acquired on prescription.

Initiatives such as travel clinic public health awareness are less of a substantial issue when encountering such issues in developing nations. When people travel from areas such as this the volume of outgoing traffic is far less and is often only that of returning to nations which are well equipped. Therefore many of these people will already have seen and been informed about what needs to be done and what prophylaxis if any is required. Implementing other public health initiatives are also problematic as they often require the use of vaccines that are refrigerated. This is an obvious monetary problem in hot countries that may have limited availability of such equipment. It can be seen as an issue in both transport and then storage with delivery.

Upon spending my time in various general practices I have seen that the rotavirus is delivered through the oral route in babies that are a few months old. This has only been a recent introduction and is aimed at stemming the perpetual problem of gastroenteritis in new-born babies that can be a particular problem and lead to severe and even fatal consequences. It is testament to the evolution of the NHS and in general public health medicine that something which was often seen as inevitable encountering for most children is now being targeted and successfully prevented. The fact that it can

be given via the oral route and therefore circumventing issues surrounding intramuscular or subcutaneous injections further adds to this as most babies especially find this latter to be particularly traumatic. The vaccine is kept in the fridge and this may be a problem when thinking about transferring to other resource poor settings, in particular developing nations where this sort of intervention may be a particular boon.

I have further strengthened my desire to pursue a career in general practice because of the time I have spent in various clinics over my medical training. I find the stark contrast in hospital medicine a contributing factor when coming to such a conclusion. I am particularly suited to the somewhat more controlled environment of general practice and I feel this is best suited to my personality and work traits. The wide array of patients that I have been able to come across in the general practice setting, I have not been able to in hospital medicine. Furthermore the scope of intervention that is achievable in general practice is especially endearing because I feel like I have built a solid medical base over my last few years of training and can see myself fulfilling my potential in the field.

Contrary to popular misconception I have found that the profession is one that centres on teamwork and that drawing the distinctions in working life between when one is required to be self-sufficient or that when engaging other team members when necessary is a challenge that I am especially relishing. The team involved not only includes the doctors and nurses working within the practice but the wider team such as prescription clerks, secretaries and the local teams such as social services and child healthcare boards. There is also a need to reach out to physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

In summary I have thoroughly enjoyed my time within general practice and am glad that my resolve in wanting to pursue a career in this great specialty has only been further amalgamated. I will continue to pursue opportunities that can be undertaken that will add to my experience and help with my application in the coming year for an opportunity to train within this specialty. I look forward to working and training in the field as a fully qualified doctor as it will no doubt allow me to practice and not only observe as I am largely doing at the current moment in time.