

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Learning objectives:

- ☐ What are the most prevalent general medical conditions in Malaysia? How do they differ from the UK?**
- ☐ How are general medical services organised and delivered in Malaysia? How do they differ from the UK?**
- ☐ Find out the differences and similarities in the management of hospitals in Malaysia to that of the UK, looking for ways to improve our healthcare services.**
- ☐ To develop confidence and be flexible working in a different environment to that I am used to. To enhance my interpersonal skills with patients and staff members of different background and culture to the ones I have been exposed to in the UK. To develop my knowledge on general medical conditions.**

I chose to carry out my elective in Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL) in Malaysia. HKL is a Malaysian government-owned public hospital in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. It is the largest hospital under the Ministry of Health of Malaysia, and it consists of 83 wards and 2300 beds. I chose to do my elective here so that I can compare the health system in United Kingdom (UK) to a hospital that is also in an urban setting, but in a less developed country. There is also a great diversity of ethnicity and religion in Kuala Lumpur, which would provide me with an opportunity to interact with patients and staff members of different background and cultures to ones I have been exposed to in the UK. Furthermore, I also had many recommendations from my friends from previous years for HKL as they said they had a great time doing their elective there, and the staff and healthcare professionals were very helpful and enjoyed teaching students.

During my time in HKL I hoped to see the differences and similarities in the management of hospitals in Malaysia to that of the UK. I wanted to see how medical services were organised and delivered compared to UK. I wanted to see what the most prevalent general medical conditions were in Kuala Lumpur, and how this differed from those in UK. Lastly, I wanted to use this opportunity to develop and enhance my confidence, interpersonal skills, and general medical knowledge, as well as get flexible working in a different environment to one I am used to.

Malaysia has both public and private healthcare system. HKL is a government owned public hospital. Treatment in public hospitals in Malaysia is free for government servants. For non-government servants, there is a very small fee for treatment. Due to this small fee, the public hospitals are accessible to almost all locals. In this sense, the public system in Malaysia is similar to the NHS system. Besides the public hospitals, there are also many private healthcare systems available in Malaysia. Many wealthy locals may choose to go to a private hospital as it is cleaner with a better standard of care, it consists of more recent technology, and shorter waiting times.

During my placement in HKL, I spent my time shadowing a team on the general medical ward. It was similar to hospitals in UK in the sense that there were separate wards for males and females. The wards

were a lot larger than wards in UK, however, it was more crowded. The beds were all placed very close to each other to accommodate for the large number of beds required. The ward had no air condition, making it a very hot and humid environment to be in. Some patients did have fans to help resolve this issue. One thing that did surprise me was that the general medical ward in HKL had both chronic and acute patients. The patients were roughly divided across different areas of the ward, depending on whether they are a chronic or acute case. This is not something you will see in UK hospitals, as acute patients will usually be admitted in higher intensity wards.

The way general medical services were delivered in HKL was very similar to the UK. Just like in UK, the ward rounds consisted of a consultant, registrar, and junior doctors. However, nurses in charge of each bay were also involved throughout the ward round, which is not something you may see often in UK. Just like in the UK, the junior doctor wrote down the notes, whilst the consultant examined and took histories from the patient. Drugs were prescribed on a drug chart, like UK hospitals. Unlike the UK, most of the investigations and imaging were all present as hard copies and not electronically. Even x-rays were present as films instead of being on a computer, with the images often read against room light rather than a back light. The doctors spoke to patients mainly in Malay or any other local language the patient spoke, but when talking to other healthcare professionals they spoke in English. This made it very easy for me to understand what was going on.

Common conditions I encountered in HKL include diabetes, hypertension, and coronary artery disease. These are also some common conditions that we encounter in UK. Having explored Kuala Lumpur, I noticed that many people smoke, and that there are many fast food restaurants around. I believe these factors along with lack of public health awareness contributed to this increasing trend in these conditions. However, there was also some other conditions in HKL that are not so common in UK, such as dengue fever. This illustrated to me how common conditions may vary according to geographical distributions.

One patient I saw was a 47 years old gentleman who came in following opioid intoxication. His respiratory system was severely affected, and so he was intubated. Again, I was surprised to see an intubated person in general medical ward, but the doctors told me that this is a common thing. I was informed that the degree of exposure each patient gets from nurses depends on the severity of their conditions. A lot of patients also had dengue fever, and TB, many of which were incidental findings. This surprised me because in UK if someone has TB they will usually be kept in an isolation room. However, in HKL, they were not kept in isolation, and instead were placed next to other patients. Again, I was informed that this was a common occurrence.

During my placement in HKL, I noticed that patient confidentiality was very poor in HKL compared to UK. During ward rounds, the patients' curtains would normally remain open. Also, because the beds were placed very closely to each other, it made it difficult for doctors to discuss cases in a confidential manner. Even handwashing was not very good in HKL compared to hospitals in UK. Despite alcohol gel being present by every bed, I did not see healthcare professionals regularly wash their hand before and after seeing each patient. They did however practise careful handwashing, and use of masks when seeing patients with known TB.

One of the most memorable cases I witnessed was an elderly patient in his 80s who was brought in after feeling unwell and not eating properly for 3 months. The doctors showed me his X-ray, and asked me what I thought was going on. I found it hard to read the image due to poor lighting, however I managed to guess right a left lung collapse. I then saw the doctor break bad news to the patient's

son. Unlike in the UK, the news was not broken in a side room with few people and less distraction. Instead, the news was broken during the ward round, with the whole team present, and all the other patients very closely around. As the doctor and patient's son spoke the language Tamil (my native language), I was able to understand what was being said. Although the environment was not suitable for breaking bad news, the doctor did break the news very empathetically.

Overall, I really enjoyed my placement at HKL. I encountered a lot of similar conditions here to UK, as well as seeing some conditions that are not so common in UK. I was able to broaden my knowledge on general medical conditions, as well as improve my interpersonal skills. Despite the differences and similarities in the functioning of hospitals in Malaysia and UK, the ultimate goal in both were to provide the best care for patients. I would highly recommend this placement for future medical students.