

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Gaining an understanding of the healthcare system back home in Singapore is an aim that I have always wanted to achieve. Being overseas and having placements in London hospitals the last 5 years, I feel that I have lost touch with the healthcare system back home. I have had a few placements in Singapore before, such as cardiothoracic surgery as well as obstetrics and gynaecology. I have learnt a lot and gained a lot of insight into these surgical specialities. Over the years of medical school, I have developed an interest in internal medicine and therefore wish to also experience internal medicine in Singapore.

Rheumatology is a speciality that I have always been interested in and one of the aims of this elective is to gain an understanding of the career in Singapore. It has been a pleasure being apart of the Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology (RAI) team. I have been exposed to various aspects of the work carried out by the RAI team and everyone has been so welcoming and passionate about teaching.

Compared to that in the UK, I have observed that the rheumatology patients here present with much more serious manifestations and are generally more clinical unwell. It is really amazing to see first hand the level of the quality of care provided by the team.

From the team, I have learnt the importance of being meticulous in clerking patients - getting a detailed timeline of the events and symptoms, asking about specific connective tissue disease symptoms and taking a detailed social history. My clerkings have areas that are lacking and I will take away the lessons learnt from this elective and apply these principles to the best of my ability in whichever area that I will be practising in the future.

The team also taught me the importance of being able to identify and manage all of the various issues surrounding the patient and not only to focus on the presenting complaint. There is often multi-organ and multi-system involvement in rheumatological conditions; many patients are also taking long term immunosuppressants and steroids. Therefore it is important to provide all-rounded care to patients such as monitoring their cardiovascular risk factors, managing osteoporosis and medication side effects.

One aspect of public health that I have been made aware of is the relatively high rate of antibiotic resistance in Singapore as compared to that in the UK; with a high level of MRSA's and ESBL's. This can pose a very serious risk in patients with rheumatological conditions and are immunosuppressed. Therefore handwashing and responsible prescription of antibiotics is of absolute importance and I will always bear this in mind.

Another important learning point is that only key investigations are carried out for each patient. In the UK, it is common practice to order a full set of baseline bloods for any patient and order investigations with much lesser justification. In Singapore, because the patient will need to pay for the investigations ordered, the doctors are much more cautious and thoughtful when deciding which investigations to carry out; therefore they will only choose to carry out the key investigations that will have an impact on the clinical decision. This practice is actually something that I think the UK should learn to adopt - this is a great way of saving resources and I felt that I was able to gain a deeper

understanding of the disease by being able to justify which investigations are necessary. This will definitely be one of the guiding principles of my practice in the future as a doctor.

All in all this was a very productive and educational placement. I have learnt a lot from the local students, the doctors as well as the various professionals I have had the chance to work with in this placement.