

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Hospital Kuala Lumpur is a government hospital based in the capital of Malaysia. The hospital is one of the largest in Malaysia, consisting of 84 wards and accommodating 2,300 beds. For this reason, I was keen to carry out my elective at Hospital Kuala Lumpur, as I hoped to encounter a variety of medical conditions, as well as gain a thorough understanding of the healthcare system and the culture of Malaysia.

I was based on the general medical ward, which consisted of several bays, and had 8-10 patients per bay. During my time on the elective, I observed a variety of cases, affecting patients of different ages and diverse backgrounds. Chronic health problems, such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure, seemed to be as common in Malaysia as they are in the United Kingdom (UK). These lifestyle diseases have many contributing factors, which are influenced by local culture. Whilst exploring the local area, we noticed that cigarette smoking was common place. However, there were several signs stating that cigarette smoking was not allowed in indoor areas, thus it seemed that the government had put in place public health measures to reduce smoking. Food is also an important part of local culture, with a variety of fast food places available, which is likely to have contributed to the diseases seen.

I expected to see a variety of tropical diseases, however I noted that Tuberculosis and Dengue fever were the most common. Due to my placements in East London, I had encountered patients with Tuberculosis in the past. However, I had not previously seen dengue fever. Dengue fever is a disease transmitted by mosquitos, associated with fever, headache, malaise and muscle and joint pain. It is an important differential to be aware of in a feverish patient who has recently travelled abroad.

On the wards, I noticed that the format of the medical team and ward rounds were like that of the UK. The medical team consisted of the consultant, registrar, senior house officer, foundation doctor and medical students. Most of the consultations were carried out in Malay, however the medical notes and discussion were carried out in English. The general format of documentation was similar to the UK, with the equivalent Foundation Year 1 writing in the notes. I realised that there was less use of computers, in comparison to the UK, as currently in the National Health Service there is a move to use E-prescribing and laptops during ward-rounds. This particularly struck me when a member of the medical team pulled out a hard copy of the Chest X-ray on the ward round, and held it up to look at it.

Language barriers made it difficult to follow consultations at times, however the team was friendly, patient and willing to translate. I also observed the non-verbal communication between doctor and patient. It seemed that there was a lot of trust in the doctor, with the doctors guiding the consultation. It seemed paternalistic, which was enhanced by the wearing of a white coat on the ward. I initially felt uncomfortable wearing a white coat on the wards, as this is something no longer carried out in the UK, and I felt that it created a barrier between the doctor and patient. However, I could see that it contributed to the local culture of respect for doctors, wherein the patients ostensibly have more trust in their doctors, but may be less likely to question the doctor regarding treatment plans.

Medical management was comparable to that of the UK, with the use of similar medication for the treatment for chronic and infectious diseases, although at times the regimen varied. I felt that the

isolation of patients with infectious diseases was poor. Patients with infectious diseases were located on the furthest end of the ward, with a separate ward round carried out by another team on this group of patients. Whereas in the UK, this group of patients would have each had their own side rooms, which would require aprons, face masks and gloves to be worn prior to entering. In Malaysia, Doctors are required to wear face masks and wash their hands in between patients, however they did not always do so. The poor hygiene conditions were made worse by the fact that it was very cramped in the wards, with up to 40 patients per ward. Patient beds were close together, and unlike the UK, curtains were not drawn around the patient during the ward round. There was also a lack of emphasis on confidentiality, which meant that difficult conversations, including breaking bad news, would be carried out in view of other patients. This contrasts with the UK, where such conversations are held privately.

The health care system in Malaysia is divided into government and private health care. Hospital Kuala Lumpur is a government hospital, wherein government servants have access to free health care, and non-government employees pay a small fee which is very affordable. We did not have the opportunity to see a private healthcare hospital, however upon our enquiries, it seemed that the private hospitals have better facilities and conditions than those of the government hospitals. During our travel around the city, we noticed several polyclinics, which it seems are like GP practices in the UK. Polyclinics also form an important part of the local healthcare system.

Outside of our time in the hospital, we explored the local area to gain an understanding of the local culture and traditions. We appreciated the local parks, caves and mountains. Food is a very important of Malaysian culture, with a distinct cuisine dissimilar to that tasted before, however it was very enjoyable.

Overall, I enjoyed my placement in Hospital Kuala Lumpur, and my time in Malaysia. I observed a variety of conditions, similar and to different to those in the UK. I also appreciated the difference in medical culture between Malaysia and the United Kingdom. We also enjoyed exploring the local environment, and found that the locals were both helpful and friendly.