

ELECTIVE REPORT

The placement in cardiology in London Chest hospital has been very valuable and informative. Not having had the chance to do a cardiology firm previously, this was an excellent chance to gain a deeper understanding in the specialty. Also working in a specialist hospital in East London was an excellent opportunity, East London having one of the highest rates of heart disease in the capital. I was expecting to be able to both make up for the fact that I had little exposure to cardiology whilst training and also give myself a good foundation for when I start my foundation year as a junior doctor very soon. As I have a cardiology rotation for four months and a placement in this specialty would be very helpful.

After this elective I was better able to appreciate how patients with MI's and Angina were managed. Observing in a cath lab and experiencing how percutaneous coronary intervention took place and the different options available was very interesting. It is one thing reading about stenting and angioplasty but observing how it happens was much more advantageous and an excellent way to revise anatomy of the coronary arteries and visualize what I had read in books. I was amazed to see how much could be done by such minimally invasive means and the technical skills required in these procedures.

Clerking patients and participating in ward round was an excellent way of observing and learning how patients are managed according to their symptoms and other social needs also. It also was a good way of understanding what drugs are used when and some basics surrounding drug interactions. Cardiovascular medication are very common among the elderly and make up a bulk of the medication that is prescribed and seeing many patients in the hospital with these medications aids in gaining a deeper knowledge about doses etc. The importance of blood pressure control and other lifestyle changes has also been reinforced. I was also taken aback at the willingness and effectiveness of some colleagues and other health professionals in regards to teaching. How willing to teach is essential in a career such as medicine and how much difference a small amount of time can make to the learning of a student. All of which ultimately leads to a better level of care for the patient.

I believe having been able to have much of the learning self-directed was a good way for me to steer the learning where I deemed appropriate to what I wanted to learn. I was able to join other consultants and teams on ward rounds and clinics, and was free to talk to patients from all teams working in the hospital. I was able to refine my cardio respiratory examination skills in this placement, owing to the various clinical signs the patients had. In other district hospital where we have placements it is sometimes not easy to find patients, which have obvious cardiovascular pathology and clinical signs. However in London Chest Hospital there was an abundant supply of patients to help get familiar with these clinical signs.

There were many opportunities to learn and reflect when seeing patients in this placement. It highlighted many difficulties and obstacles doctors face at times when treating patients. In one particular case there was a 65-year-old Type 2 Diabetic patient who was in for investigation of recurrent chest pain. He had a myocardial infarction and a CABG in 2004. He now has a biventricular implanted cardioverter defibrillator. After seeing the patient on ward round the doctor got the impression that the patient had a very care free attitude to his condition and did not seem to take consideration to what the doctor was saying and was displaying a general lack of concern. I immediately detected a change in tact and approach of the doctor towards the patient. The doctor became much more epithetical, sitting next to the patient at the level of the patient as opposed to standing at the end of the bed. Talking in a more caring and sensitive manner showing much more interest in the patient. He also explored further with questioning and explaining to the patient that he can see how difficult the recurrent stays in hospital are for the patient. The doctor paid specific attention to the patient's feelings. The patient slowly became more responsive, open and interested in what the doctor had to say.

This showed the importance of being receptive to patient's cues verbal and non-verbal. Some consultations require a more firm approach to ensure optimum clinical outcome, whereas some require a more epithetical and sensitive approach. In this situation I believe that if the doctor carried on the consultation without adjusting and adapting his approach and communication, it would have led to a less productive consultation. Showing empathy and good communication skills can play a vital role in the management of patients and possibly increases compliance.

In a different scenario I realized the importance of ensuring patients understand their medication regime. Barriers such as language and understanding can be very common. Especially in East London and the area surrounding London Chest Hospital where there is a very multicultural population which lead to many non English speaking patients presenting at the hospital. The doctor in this particular case noted that a patient who had a docette box had not been taking his medication as prescribed and had been taking them at irregular times, which possible led to the symptoms he was experiencing. This may have been a reflection of the lack of concern that the patient was showing. However most likely in this case was the lack of understanding. The patient was only fluent in Bangladeshi and spoke very little English. He seemed to just about understand what the doctor was saying and replied only in "yes" and "no". The doctor explored the reasons for not taking medications and explained the medications again. However to be 100% sure the patient understood how to take the medication the doctor organised a health advocate at a later date. With the health advocate the doctor was not only go to through the consultation again but also explain how to use the docette box, the importance of taking the right medication at the right time and a quick summary of what each medication does. This may have been time consuming but I believe was very important in ensuring compliance with the medication. As the clearer the message to the

patient about why, how and when to take the medication, the increased likelihood that they will adhere to treatment.

Misunderstanding regarding medication can lead to unnecessary hospital admissions. I think spending some time and effort and taking steps to ensure patients understand their medications completely can in the long run be beneficial to the patient and to the hospital by keeping beds free. This also impressed upon me how it is not enough to just elicit signs and symptoms and then prescribe medication. A doctor's role extends much further. Also it is the doctor's responsibility to do all he or she can with everything at their disposal including their knowledge, skills, other members of the medical team and other resources to ensure the patient has the best possible chance of gaining the maximum potential benefit from the service a hospital offers.