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Elective report –ROYAL LONDON HOSPITAL PAEDIATRIC SURGERY DEPARTMENT

I had the pleasure of undertaking my elective at the Royal London Hospitals Paediatric Surgery department in Whitechapel, London. I spent five weeks at this department where I was allowed to observe and shadow the consultants as well as the registrars during their clinics, operating theatres, meetings and trauma calls. I choose the Royal London Hospital because of the reputation of its paediatric surgery department and the fact that it is designated as a level 1 trauma centre which gave me a unique opportunity to observe the management of serious trauma injuries in children and adolescents that I was unlikely to get in other hospitals. The Royal London Hospital is also unique in that it serves a very multicultural and deprived area of East London with diseases such as TB and HIV being quite commonly seen. This meant that the patients seen were often from different ethnic backgrounds, and may have parents that have trouble communicating in English.

I was the only student undertaking an elective in paediatric surgery during my elective period here and had to attend ward rounds at 8.30 every morning or attend the emergency theatre list instead. This was not compulsory but it was recommended as it was a good learning opportunity given that the neonates were discussed extensively in the ward rounds. The ward rounds themselves were conducted by the consultant surgeons in combination with the neonatology consultants and their respective teams. This was surprising for me as it's a different system to the ones I have observed so far in adult medicine where the ward round is done by one team only. The importance of team work was clearly demonstrated by this approach as the management of these patients were at times so complex that input from both specialities was required. After the ward round I would sometimes be allowed to do a general examination of a neonate under the supervision of the neonatology registrar so that I can practise my neonatal examination skills. This was particularly useful as a lot of the babies on the ward had good signs.

Once or twice a week I would shadow the paediatric surgical registrar who had the on-call bleep. This was a very busy role, as the Royal London hospital is the only paediatric surgery department in all of east London, so referrals were constantly coming from surrounding hospitals or from GP surgeries. A very common reason the paediatric surgical registrar would be bleeped for was query appendicitis or torsion of the testis. Both these conditions are important to recognise early as the symptoms can masquerade as other pathologies and failure to recognise these conditions early can result in perforation of the bowel or loss of a testicle in the patient. On my elective I learnt that management of appendicitis was done differently to that normally seen in adult practise or in other paediatric surgery centres. Once a firm diagnosis of appendicitis had been reached, antibiotics would be started and the patient would be hydrated for approximately 24 hours before an operation was done. This approach is thought to reduce any complications during surgery. Unique to paediatrics, I also observed that it can be challenging explaining to a child that they need an operation. Depending on the child's age good communication with the parents is required so that child prepares themselves for having an operation.

A lot of the time on my elective I was allowed to scrub in during operations. Watching procedures being done up close as well as having them explained to me was particularly educational. As I had

previously undertaken research on anorectal anomalies it was very interesting to observe the procedures up-close. I also observed PEG removals, anal sphincter dilatations, hernia repairs and funduplications.

Overall I would definitely recommend the Royal London Hospital for any student who has a keen interest in paediatric surgery as it offers a lot of hands-on opportunities as well as a large and diverse patient group that may not be seen anywhere else in the UK. The staff are also very friendly and are always keen to teach.