

Elective Report – Hospital and Community Paediatrics

For my elective placement, I undertook a paediatric attachment at Newham University Hospital. Having already done a paediatric placement at NUH in my fourth year and coupled with a desire to go into a career in Paediatrics, I thought this placement would let me explore all the areas of paediatric care with some flexibility. I have gained invaluable experience in the inpatient, outpatient and community care provided to children in the London borough of Newham.

Newham has a diverse population with higher proportions of Black and Asian ethnic groups. Therefore higher rates of sickle cell, Beta Thalassaemia and other disorders such as Obesity Type 2 Diabetes are more prevalent in Newham in comparison to the rest of the UK. In 2008-09 Newham had the 3rd highest proportion of children recorded as obese in reception and the 4th highest proportion children recorded as obese in year 6. Obesity is more common amongst Black Caribbean, Black African and White ethnic groups such as East Europeans. Moreover Newham has a very high rate of child poverty in comparison to other boroughs and as result these children are at increased risk of poorer mental, physical and social health, more limiting chronic disorders, disabilities and having fewer life opportunities. (Data taken from the report)

To cater for its varied population, Newham conducted a Children and Young Peoples Needs Assessment in 2010 to identify and address key health and social issues faced by the young population in Newham aged 0-19 years. The aim of this assessment was to introduce health provisions to children living in Newham.

Part of my elective objective was to explore the different levels of care and support provided in the hospital and community in Newham. Inpatients up to the age of 16 are cared for on rainbow ward. There is also an observation bay at NUH for children requiring overnight admission and a day-case bay; where children come for day-case surgery, medical treatment or investigations. Various other treatments are also given such as neonate's assessment and observation for prolonged jaundice, and follow-up, after admissions to the ward or A&E attendance.

NUH has a diverse range of outpatient clinics including specialist clinics for neonatal follow-up, haematology, asthma, epilepsy, endocrinology, neurology and cardiology. As part of my paediatric attachment I observed outpatient Diabetes and Weight Management as well as general paediatric clinics. I also sat in with group therapy for children with diabetes to teach them how to control their disease as well as useful techniques such as calorie counting. I was also able to observe Fran the paediatric dietician and Jenny, Paediatric diabetic nurse specialist to further develop my understanding of the issues faced by young people with diabetes living in Newham.

In the community an extensive range of services are available to parents and carers of children within Newham. Once such service is the Special Advisory Clinics which address the need for children with mild to moderate developmental, growth or behavioural problems. Children can be referred to these clinics from their GP, school or SEN coordinators locally. Children with complex developmental problems including children with suspected Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy and Down Syndrome are seen at the Child Development Centre for an extensive multidisciplinary assessments and follow-up. Occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy services run their own clinics and groups whilst also participating in the multidisciplinary process at CDC and making referrals to the special advisory clinics. Other services include 6-8 week child health checks, Children in care (looked after children) Clinic, Enuresis clinic,

Immunisation clinic, Child protection assessments, where community paediatricians undertake paediatric assessments in suspected cases of abuse, Audiology clinics and School Medical checks.

Having observed both settings I really appreciated the work paediatricians do and the range of services they interact with. I developed my understanding of the different services involved, who was required where, how parents and children came into contact with certain services and where there were limitations in the level of care and support available.

As the population of Newham is so diverse one of the most valuable experiences to me was to realise how often communication and cultural differences can make working with parents difficult. By observing so many different clinics and sitting in patients from many backgrounds I was able to develop my communication skills and appreciate how culture can influence the manner in which you deliver medical advice.

This elective placement has been an invaluable experience to me and has made me realise the different aspects of care involved when working with children. It has also highlighted to me the vast range of paediatric careers I could explore as a future doctor. Most importantly I think this elective has further instilled my passion to become a paediatrician and I am grateful for all the teams involved that have made this attachment worthwhile.

(the report can be accessed online at <http://www.newham.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F6774ECC-CDF4-4C66-9218-7723EF443C98/0/ChildrensNeedsAssessment09100.pdf>)