

Elective report – Discussion of Objectives

Name: Zeyana Saidi

1) Describe the pattern of disease/illness in the Solomon Islands and discuss this in the context of global health

During my elective in the Solomon Islands I found that the main patterns of disease/illness that I came across were those that are also strongly found in western countries such as coronary heart disease and stroke. The main difference however is unfortunately many patients that we saw would only seek medical help during advanced stages of their disease. For example, patients would present with extremely high blood pressures, high cholesterol levels and late stages of heart failure. Other illnesses that were quite common were infections such as influenza, pneumonia, TB and Malaria.

Within the context of global health, as mentioned the high incidence of coronary heart disease and stroke within the Solomon Islands is in keeping with the patterns seen in most developed countries. However, the high incidence of chest infections and malaria is a departure from what we would expect, although not uncommon in a tropical country.

2) Describe the pattern of health provision in the Solomon Islands and contrast this with that seen in the UK

The level of health provision that the average citizen of the Solomon Islands receives is much different than those seen in the UK. To begin with, access to basic healthcare facilities is much more limited. For example, basic GP services as we understand them do not exist on the island. This means that an individual's first experience with the healthcare service is usually via a district hospital. With regards to the hospital services, things such as XRay machines, Ultrasounds and MRI's are not readily available. For this, patients have to travel further afield and pay for these services themselves. In addition, the laboratory in the hospital that deals with processing bloods is quite small and understaffed which is reflected in the significant delays in getting any kind of blood results. Other more advanced diagnostic equipment and complex surgical procedures would also have to be completed in a neighbouring country which also differs from that in the UK.

3) To gain a better understanding of some of the challenges and difficulties faced by healthcare professionals in the region and the local population

As discussed above, most of the challenges and difficulties faced by healthcare professionals has to do with a lack of equipment, diagnostic tools and sometimes even the lack of electricity and clean, adequate water supplies. Additionally, there was also a distinct lack of healthcare professionals to deal with the large volume of patients.

From a patient perspective, the challenges and difficulties faced by healthcare professionals here is that patients would always present at such a late disease in their disease. This was due to a number of factors such as patient education (ie. patients attempting to use local/spiritual forms of healing) before

making contact with healthcare professionals, the distance that patients lived from their nearest hospital and unfortunately, a lack of funds.

4) To learn more about the Solomon islands and gain an understanding and appreciation of the rich culture, heritage and history of the people that live there. To learn how medicine is practiced in more rural areas of the Island and to enhance my communication skills.

The entire experience of being in the Solomon Islands and getting to learn about its geography, history and healthcare system was an amazing learning opportunity. For all the differences in the lack of healthcare provisions between the UK and the Solomon Islands though, at its foundation, medicine was practiced here as you would expect, with the patient being front and centre every decision that the healthcare team carried out and the basics of good patient care being adhered to.