

Asif Ahmed

Objective 1: describe the pattern of health problems prevalent in Belize?

[1]

Here are a number of health conditions prevalent in Belize. The most common conditions include: malaria, dengue fever, gastroenteritis, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. Since Belize is a developing country, many of these conditions are related to issues surrounding, infrastructure, standard of sanitation, and are reflective of the general lack of education and awareness about how these conditions are acquired and transmitted. Historically, malaria has caused major problems in Belize. Although treatment for Malaria has improved dramatically over the years, there are still concerns about future outbreaks. Similar concerns surround dengue fever, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. Due to the relatively fragile infrastructure and low population, an outbreak of HIV/AIDS or any of the other medical conditions noted above may impact the population size as well as the human resources.

Describe the health provision in Belize?

Healthcare in Belize is provided through both public and private healthcare systems. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is the government agency responsible for overseeing the entire health sector and is also the largest provider of public health services in Belize. The MoH offers affordable care to a majority of Belizeans with a strong focus on providing quality healthcare through a range of public programs and institutions. In contrast to the public health sector, the private health sector provides care to a smaller portion of the population. However, similar to the public sector, private health services are offered at a relatively low cost with a shared emphasis on quality of care and quality improvement.

[2] Describe pattern of health provision in Belize and contrast to the UK

Similar to the UK, the Belize healthcare system has its public and private sector.

Public health care in Belize is available to everyone but the majority of funding is targeted into the city of Belize and the surrounding eight hospitals. This has in many ways been to the detriment of more rural areas of Belize which are very much been left to their own devices amid concerns about the standard of health care available in these regions and the actual medical statistics relayed to the United Nations and other outside parties. Indeed the United Nations deemed that figures emanating

Asif Ahmed

from Belize with regards to mortality rates and medical conditions were unreliable and hence not included in official reports and forecasts.

Private healthcare

There is no doubt that those who can afford private health care in Belize take a very keen interest in this particular area of the marketplace. While the country is often associated with potential tax haven issues and has indeed attracted some of the richest people in the world this is a relatively small number of people and the headlines are therefore a little misleading. As you would expect from any country where there is the slightest increase in average incomes, which has occurred in Belize over last 20 years, the private healthcare companies around the world were not slow in coming forward.

3. Get a broader understanding of how Physicians deal with HIV/AIDs and other infectious diseases

Belize is known to have the highest HIV prevalence in Central America, having at least 4,800 people living with HIV. In the age group of 15-49 AIDS is leading cause of death. The Doctor explained this to me that in Belize the lack of education on HIV prevention and other factors contribute largely to its high prevalence. An important factor is the very negative stigma surrounding the disease meaning patients are too embarrassed to present at clinics and get help. There have been campaigns to educate the nation and help prevent the transmission of the disease. The doctor mentioned the "Together We Can" (TWC) campaign as having been very helpful. Further measures have been put in place with a majority of women receiving HIV testing and almost all new-borns receiving prophylactic medication. Posters for the 'National Aids Program' help encourage getting tested for HIV as soon as possible.

There is also the importance of the Doctors themselves educating patients on safe sex and how to prevent transmission of disease. However the Doctors feel like more national health campaigns are need as it is very difficult for them to educate the masses.

4. Practice more practical skills, as well as learning how to communicate to a variety of different people. Also practice history, diagnosis and management plans.

I had a fantastic experience working in San Ignacio Hospital. I believe I was able to learn so much in such a short time. I was able to practice lots of blood taking and cannulating which are the bread and butter for the junior house officer. I was able to communicate with all the patients effectively as they spoke English. I found it very easy to build up a very good rapport with them, as they are very friendly and extremely respectful. I was able to help take effective histories and think of suitable differential diagnosis. I found that I still have so much to learn. I am sure that I will get much better with lots of experience in the coming few months as I begin as a junior house officer. I was able to plan what I would do ideally for the patient if the management were up to me. It was quite different however to the Doctors management plan, as the resources are limited and not so easily accessible.