

Report
Elective Reflection

I managed to split my elective between two three week stints at Bethesda. This has been a predominantly positive experience. I feel that I have managed to tackle the majority of my elective objectives. These objectives included: The management of socioeconomically disadvantaged patients, with a focus on obstetric patients, of both HIV positive and negative status, in a resource and limited rural setting.

I spent the first three weeks of my placement in the Obstetric department. In my first week I was involved in caesarean sections, managing patients on the labour ward and in maternity (pre and post-natal). Most of my time during the first week was spent shadowing a very competent doctor who had a great deal of experience managing the maternity ward. This first week shadowing proved very useful as after my first week the ward doctors changed and the new doctor had slightly less experience in the same role. This allowed me to be useful and share a greater part of the responsibility for managing patients. Areas that I feel I have really gained confidence in are; clinical assessment of pregnancy, labour, pre and post natal maternity care. I am more comfortable with the distinctions between hypertension in pregnancy and its management. I am more confident recognising cervicitis, false labour, pre-term labour, threatened miscarriage, IUGR and many other common presentations at Bethesda. As the weeks progressed I was given more responsibility both in and out of theatre. Reflected by the opportunity to run a parallel ward round with the ward doctor (who was checking any decisions I had made).

An issue that I will certainly take home with me is the age at which young women are having their first child, as well as the number of children that women in this part of KZN have. If I am back in the area at some time in the future this would be an area that I would certainly like to research more formally.

Although I cannot say for sure that this experience has confirmed my decision to train in Obstetrics and Gynaecology it has certainly helped to provide more information for me to make an informed decision. If O&G is the career path I choose, I will certainly feel a great deal more confident for my time at Bethesda.

The second part of my elective was spent between the Out Patient Department (OPD) and Resuscitation Unit (RU). Here I was able to practice my history taking and examination skills, as well as consolidating my medical knowledge through suggesting management plans – all in a safe and supportive environment. There were times where I felt challenged, there was always a friendly doctor to offer guidance and support however. My time in the RU was a fantastic opportunity to practice my skills as well as developing new ones. I was lucky to have been there with a very skilled and experienced doctor who was happy to teach me.

I also spent time at the hospital over weekends and nights, this allowed me to get a feel for prioritisation and also to become more confident in recognising un-well patients. These are areas that I was and still am to an extent worried about, as I will start my Foundation Training this coming August. After time spent on call I can definitely say that I am more confident with the management of many emergency

presentations both in the RU and in the Wards, (from fluid resuscitation of a deterioration patient to emergency assessment of a patient involved in a motor vehicle accident).

The objectives that I feel I could have paid more attention to are mainly centred on HIV. My baseline knowledge is fairly good, having completed my BSc dissertation on an HIV related topic. I feel that I could really have used my time at Bethesda a bit better when looking at HIV ARV regimens, and the management of complications of HIV.

I felt very well supported at Bethesda and also that I was given the opportunity to learn and take on appropriate responsibility. Hopefully I will be back at some point in the not too distant future, when I have a little bit more knowledge and skill to offer.

Would you kindly pass on my thank you to all the team at Bethesda, for being so accommodating and helpful.