

Elective Report

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What are the prevalent conditions that patients present to as an emergency in Australia? How do they differ from the UK

The UK and Australia have every similar presentations to the emergency department. During my placement chest pain was the most common presentation which is similar to the A and E I had shadowed in Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow. Other common presentations include asthma attacks, abdominal pain, fluid and electrolyte presentations, fractures, acute blood loss and mental health emergencies for example suicide attempts. The most paediatric emergency presentation that I had encountered was bronchiolitis. This was perhaps because I was in Australia during the winter season when this is most common. This was great for me to see as I had my A and E placement during the summer season and thus I had never encountered this presentation before.

How are the emergency services organised and delivered? How does this compare to the UK.

In the UK the new medical speciality of acute medicine has been established with new departments of acute medical units running throughout the hospital. These are essentially an area where patients suffering from acute medical illness can be assessed and admitted before breaking the A and E 4 hour timed rule. However in Australia these systems are not present. The emergency department are where the medical patients are stabilised and they continue care until they have a certain diagnosis and thus the emergency department is the main portal of entry, in comparison to the UK where 75 percent of patients are directly admitted to the acute medical units. In Australia, once a diagnosis is suspected the patients from the accident and emergency department are admitted directly to their speciality units. Both in the UK and Australia the triage system exists. The triage Nurse, who assesses injuries or illnesses allocates a priority according to how urgently the patient requires treatment.

This system ensures that the sickest patients are treated by doctors first. The triage system exists in all public hospitals throughout Australia and uses a uniform set of criteria to categorise patients for treatment. However in the UK they would turn away minor cases which can be sorted out in tertiary medical centres. However in Australia they see everyone and do not turn people away.

Describe the health care system In Australia

The Australian health system works on medical cover which is a mix of common wealth and state government services in addition to private health insurance services. According to data on Australian health system they are believed to be delivering health outcomes above average, with Australians life expectancy to be 74 years of age. The most common care package established since 1984 is called Medicare. This is the government's universal insurance scheme for Australian residents. They provide free treatment to a patient in a public hospital. Medicare covers the doctors consultation fees, any tests and investigations ordered and most surgical procedures. This enables patients to be covered for 100 percent of care in the hospital as an inpatient and 75 percent of GP charges. If one wants to attend a private hospital then Medicare package will cover the same costs that the state hospital will charge and then the patient must cover the remaining fee. Medication is paid on a co pay scheme. Individuals pay a maximum up to \$35 dollars per prescription and the state will cover any extra costs. If individuals have low incomes then they only pay \$5. However unlike in the UK, dentistry, ambulance services and optometric services are not covered under the Medicare scheme.

Describe how a career in emergency medicine differs in Australia and the UK

I chose to shadow in the emergency department as this was a career I saw myself working in. However when comparing the two departments I believe that in Australia, they are much better supported as doctors. They are guaranteed a 43 hour weeks with 5 hours of teaching which are protected. In the UK a typical NHS hospital there are around 10 registrars. However in the hospital I shadowed there are far more consultants, registrars and junior doctors. This makes night shifts and weekend less pressured and intense. The staffing level in the hospital compared to patients are far greater in Australia than in the UK. In some UK hospitals there will be only one consultant on duty for a long period of time however in Australia the staffing levels were great. The work load is very similar to the UK however it was less stressful as there

were more staff to delegate jobs too. From speaking the staff, they did mention that they work less hours in the UK with more breaks and roughly the same pay. The emergency medicine lifestyle in Australia seems far more appealing than in the UK.