

ELECTIVE (SSC5a) REPORT (1200 words)

A report that addresses the above four objectives should be written below. Your Elective supervisor will assess this.

I completed my medical elective at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. This experience was eye opening and it enriched my knowledge of the healthcare system in Thailand, it also helped me to learn about the role of rehabilitation doctors within the system. The first learning objective I developed for this elective was focussed on malaria within Thailand and understanding the public health strategies surrounding it. I chose this objective as I have previously done work experience in hospitals in the Dominican Republic where malaria was a public health issue, both Thailand and the Dominican Republic have tropical climates and mosquitos, therefore, I was curious to see how Thailand has dealt with malaria. Whilst completing my elective in Thailand I researched this issue and found that Thailand is eligible to eliminate malaria by 2025. I can appreciate that this goal is within reach due to the national malaria control programme with their 1-3-7 strategy which involves case notification within one day, case investigation within three days and foci investigation within 7 days. The strategy has reduced cases year on year. Reflecting on this, I can understand that malaria is a health issue for many countries around the world and it would seem that having an organised way of monitoring malaria is an effective way to keep track of and reduce the cases. Whilst on placement I didn't hear of malaria being a large issue in healthcare in Thailand, which shows that the strategy is working. However, I can appreciate that some countries may not have the resources to implement this strategy effectively. Upon reflection, malaria presents less of a disease burden in Thailand compared to what I saw in the Dominican Republic, this is evidence of how effective disease notification can be. I wished to learn more about the structure of the healthcare system and the differences in services available to the public in Thailand compared to the NHS in the UK. I really appreciated being immersed in a healthcare system which was different to the NHS, this allowed me to understand how the people of Thailand access healthcare. The hospital in which I had my placement was a Red Cross hospital, I learnt that

every citizen in Thailand is entitled to healthcare through universal insurance and this allows them to access at least a basic level of care, to access more specialist services and provisions patients have to have private insurance, self-pay or wait to be moved up through the tiered system. I can see similarities between Thai healthcare and the NHS in terms of basic provisions, I believe it is important that everyone should be able to access healthcare if they need it so I appreciate this model. Although, I noticed that the waiting times for appointments and treatments are shorter in Thailand than what I have observed in the NHS, this may be because there is a better funding model due to some people paying privately. The funding meant that all clinics and ward rounds were properly staffed and ran smoothly, which is sometimes not the case in the NHS. However, the healthcare system being partly privatised in Thailand may amplify inequalities. For example, we got to observe many treatments used in physiotherapy such as laser, shockwave, and robotics, people who don't have insurance to cover this may not be able to access these treatments, this wouldn't happen in the NHS as everything being effectively free means that all patients are entitled to it no matter what their financial situation or employment status even if it means that they have to wait longer for the treatment. Reflecting upon this, I can see that there are both benefits and drawbacks to the structure of the healthcare systems within the UK and Thailand in terms of access to services. Moving forwards, I would like to do some more research on public health and policies in the UK to understand more behind the rationale and structure of the NHS. Another objective outlined understanding the prevalence of tropical disease within Thailand. During my elective my placement was based within the rehabilitation department. This is an area which doesn't have its own department in the UK, therefore, I was intrigued to see the role of this department and the conditions which they see, I wished to relate this knowledge back to my objective to develop my understanding. My placement helped me to understand that most of the disease seen in rehabilitation is very similar to common conditions seen in the UK (neuropathies, strokes), and the role of the rehabilitation department is to manage the impact of a patient's condition to help them get to a good level of independent living/functioning. Thinking about this, I didn't see any tropical medicine within this department, however, from observing

their roles I can understand that they could help patients who may be affected by some tropical disease such as Japanese Encephalitis which may cause paralysis and loss of speech. This is because they have a multidisciplinary team who they work closely with; the physiotherapy department could help with movement and strength, the occupational therapy could help with activities of daily living. Reflecting on my time with the rehabilitation department, I think this department would be useful to have in the UK as it provides many services in one place which allows for good communication between departments and an ease of accessing care for patients.

For my final objective, I chose to improve my communication skills with patients and clinicians who have a different culture and first language to myself. In the NHS there is often a time pressure to get patients seen quickly, meaning that any challenges with communication can be tricky, therefore, I chose to work on this area to see if I could develop strategies that may help me in the future. When I first arrived on placement in Thailand I saw that greetings were different from the UK, in Thailand people place their hands together and bow their head, I found this difficult to remember to do when speaking to people but I soon realised that it is a norm for everyone of all ages in Thailand and when I greeted patients this way they seemed to acknowledge me more. From this experience, I appreciate that learning norms and values from the population you are treating, even learning a few key phrases and understanding what is important in their culture, can help to build rapport with patients and it helps to show that you care about them. However, upon reflection I understand that translation verbatim is key to understanding patient's issues and moving forward in the career I will practice using translation services whilst also trying to learn some norms and values from the culture/country of the patients I am treating. Overall, this was an amazing opportunity and I have learnt so much from this experience. The key areas which stand out to me are learning how the rehabilitation department function and seeing the equipment they use for their patients. I also really values learning some Thai norms and greetings and I will remember these going forwards if I ever have and Thai patients.