

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

This SSC at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital (KCMH) in Thailand has been an amazing experience and one I'll never forget. It is a country I've always wanted to visit and when the opportunity arose to arrange a medical elective here, I grabbed it with both hands. The rehabilitation medicine team have all been welcoming and engaged us throughout this placement. I have been lucky enough to see many different forms of rehabilitation using a variety of techniques and treatments to help treat patients as best as possible. I have enjoyed developing my understanding of the healthcare system within Thailand and discussing with the team the benefits and drawbacks of the differing systems between Thailand and the UK. Prior to coming to Thailand, I set out four objectives that I wanted to focus on to ensure this elective was as valuable as possible. To make this report as personal and authentic as possible, I reflect on them now based on my own experiences over the past 4 weeks.

Rehabilitation medicine isn't a specific standalone specialty in the UK healthcare system; instead, its role is divided into the relevant departments, such as a stroke patient will be managed by a neurologist. As a result, I was unsure of what to expect when joining this specialty for my elective and was intrigued as to what services it would provide. I had the impression prior to joining the team that it would be very much non-doctor led, instead with a vast majority of the work being completed by PTS, OTs and other members of the multi-disciplinary team. These members were involved in delivering the care for patients; however, a lot of the work was doctor-led, and this surprised me. I had good exposure throughout my time at KCMH was able to join clinicians in a variety of interesting clinics ranging from image-guided procedures to diabetic foot checks. Overall, this placement has helped me appreciate the role of this specialty and definitely see that there would be benefits to implementing a similar system within the NHS.

The rehabilitation side of medicine isn't something I have had the opportunity to see a lot of in the UK due to it often being led by other members of the MDT. However, I do have a basic understanding of some of the methods used in the NHS to help patients regain function as best as possible. The methods I have seen used here definitely differ from what I would expect to see at home but when asking the clinicians about them, they all have strong supporting evidence and high patient satisfaction. I was able to witness and even try some techniques throughout my 4 weeks with the team such as dry needling, c and lumbar spine traction and alcohol injections for spasticity that are not part of the regular practice methods in the UK. These were interesting to learn about and have made me appreciate these methods further, increasing my awareness of possible alternative therapies that aren't used in the UK but can provide profound health benefits for patients. Furthermore, when discussing with the clinicians about these methods, a lot of the reasons given as to why they are more commonly performed in Thailand were associated with economic factors. It does make me question the cost effectiveness of the NHS, especially at a time where funding is a huge issue. In fact, the whole placement in Thailand has provided a different perspective on how a healthcare system can be run and highlight there are some key benefits to a partially privatised healthcare system.

Whilst on placement I saw patients with health conditions that I wouldn't expect to see in the UK and the role the rehabilitation department had in their care. An example that stood out to me was a patient with polio in clinic having an appointment regarding their orthosis. Polio is a condition where the vaccine programme in the UK means it is very rarely seen and probably one I won't see throughout the remainder of my medical career so to see it here and to talk to the doctor about polio within Thailand was fascinating. I never really knew the effects of polio but following the encounter, I have been able to complete my own research into it and learn some more about the condition. Seeing the role of the physio team and orthotics in particular enabled me to increase my understanding of polio and also the importance that rehab medicine plays in a patients care with this condition. One condition I was expecting to see more of in Thailand was Dengue fever, the mosquito transferred virus. Thailand is a country renowned for it and it's a condition we were all warned about prior to starting this elective. I know rehabilitation medicine may not be the first specialty a person thinks of when considering the management of dengue but from what I saw in my time on this placement and the variety of symptoms that the rehab team are able to deal with, I think they would have a profound role on returning the patients back to their baseline function. As I reflect on the conditions I saw here, they were all ones I expected to see in a rehab department (except for polio). I would have been interested to see some of the more rogue cases and what options and strategies the department uses for them.

An objective I had when coming to Thailand was to explore the country that all visitors say is beautiful. I have never been to Southeast Asia, so I was incredibly excited to see some of the places that attract people here in the first

place. Throughout this placement, I have managed to spend time visiting the vast array of Temples in Bangkok, visit an elephant sanctuary in Chiang Mai and swim at the majestic Railay Beach. However, it isn't just the sights that make Thailand such an amazing country, the culture here is like nothing I've ever experienced. The food here is delicious and authentic and something I can never get bored of. Whether it's a street food stool in China Town or a rooftop restaurant, all meals have been unforgettable and ones I'd recommend to anyone who visits. The main thing that has made me like the culture here the most is the people. Everyone is so polite and has a very different manner to that of the UK population that is so joyful and happy. Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about the culture in this beautiful country and it has made my time here so enjoyable. I will definitely be coming back!

In conclusion, this placement has provided me with many areas to reflect on and learn from. Despite not having any hands-on experience during the rotation, witnessing and discussing different interventions has increased my understanding of the role of rehabilitation for all patients. I am so happy I chose to complete this elective, and I have made memories that will last forever. I thank all the team for getting us involved and providing me insight that I will carry with me throughout my medical career.

Thank you.