

ELECTIVE (SSC5b) REPORT (1200 words)

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

I have really enjoyed my time so far in the general surgery department at Rigshospitalet. Everyone I've met has been extremely kind, helpful and knowledgeable. I have been very impressed by the Danish public health system, and it has been very interesting to compare the similarities and differences between the UK and Danish public health system.

My time has mainly been spent watching and assisting various types of general surgery procedures, including small bowel resections, lymph node resections, Whipple's procedures, gastrectomy, liver transplantations, etc. I have also been lucky to get a taste of paediatric surgeries, and I have very much enjoyed attending surgeries that address congenital abnormalities.

Each procedure that I have attended presented its own challenges, intricacies, and potential complications. I found the surgeons' proficiency and their awareness of their boundaries remarkable. During one surgery I observed, for example, the surgeons faced difficulty pinpointing the exact cancerous location. Despite the frustration, they opted to close the patient up to avoid potential harm, displaying a prudent approach.

Witnessing a diverse array of general surgical procedures provided me with a profound educational experience, highlighting the artistry, skill, and teamwork inherent in modern surgical practice, while underscoring the transformative impact on patients' lives.

Below are a few examples of some of the operations that I attended:

Small bowel resection, which involved the removal of the diseased portion of the small intestine. Witnessing this procedure highlights the meticulous attention to detail required to preserve adequate intestinal length and ensure proper anastomosis, minimising postoperative complications such as leaks or strictures.

Whipple's procedure, also known as pancreaticoduodenectomy, is a complex operation performed for tumours involving the head of the pancreas, duodenum, or common bile duct. Watching this intricate surgery highlights the skilful coordination required to resect and reconstruct multiple abdominal organs while preserving vascular supply and biliary continuity, offering hope to patients with otherwise limited treatment options.

Liver transplantation represents the pinnacle of surgical innovation and teamwork, offering a lifeline to patients with end-stage liver disease (or in one of the cases I saw an acute liver failure due to paracetamol overdose). Observing the meticulous coordination among surgical teams, anaesthesiologists, and transplant coordinators underscores the complexity and precision required to harvest, preserve, and transplant the donor liver successfully.

Stoma creation involves creating a temporary opening to divert faecal flow. This surgical intervention aimed to address a one-year-old girl's rectovaginal fistula, a congenital condition where there is an abnormal connection between the rectum and the vagina, by allowing the affected bowel segment to rest and heal and redirecting it to a newly formed anus further down the line.

In addition to witnessing surgeries, I also acquired hands-on experience and proficiency in specific surgical techniques and procedures through active participation. I actively engaged in surgical procedures and observed the surgeons' techniques first-hand. By not only being present during surgeries, but also scrubbing

in and assisting the lead doctor (particularly in paediatric surgeries), I had the opportunity to witness the intricacies of surgical procedures, understand the decision-making process, and gain practical experience in assisting various steps of the surgery. This direct involvement allowed me to develop proficiency in specific surgical techniques and procedures, and I am excited to be using some of the skills that I have learned when I am back in London.

Furthermore, my experience involved not only observing and assisting surgical procedures, but also developing cross-cultural understanding between the UK and Denmark by engaging with diverse patient populations and actively interacting with patients and healthcare professionals in Copenhagen. This immersion allowed me to appreciate the rich tapestry of cultural diversity inherent in healthcare settings and recognise the profound impact of cultural nuances on healthcare decisions and practices.

In the UK, I regularly encounter a multicultural society with a diverse patient population representing various ethnic backgrounds, languages, and cultural beliefs. Throughout my time in medical school, I have gained insights into how cultural factors such as religious beliefs, dietary/medical preferences, and language barriers influence patients' healthcare experiences and treatment choices.

Similarly, in Denmark, I encountered a distinct cultural context characterised by its Scandinavian values of egalitarianism, trust in the healthcare system, and emphasis on work-life balance. By immersing myself in the Danish healthcare environment, I observed closely how these cultural values shape healthcare delivery, patient-provider relationships, and treatment approaches. It was interesting to meet patients that had travelled from far away (some from Greenland and the Faroe Islands) to get the best possible care at Rigshospitalet. This is quite unheard of in London, as patients tend to just go to their nearest hospital. Another difference that I noticed was how informal the doctor-patient relationship is in Denmark. Whilst consultants wear a suit and tie during ward rounds in the UK, doctors here were dressed in scrubs and a lab coat. This, in my opinion, makes the doctors more approachable, and eliminates some of the hierarchy that is very present in the UK. During my time in the general surgery department at Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, I embarked on a journey to immerse myself in Danish culture and improve my proficiency in the Danish language. Although hard at times given the language barrier, each day presented an opportunity for cultural exploration and linguistic growth as I engaged with colleagues and patients in the hospital setting. Through casual conversations, board meetings, surgical discussions, and daily interactions, I gradually absorbed Danish terminology and customs, gaining confidence in expressing myself in the local language.

Beyond the hospital environment, I actively sought to experience Danish culture by exploring Copenhagen and participating in local activities. From strolling through the historic streets of Nyhavn to indulging in traditional Danish cuisine at local eateries, I embraced every opportunity to immerse myself in the vibrant cultural tapestry of Denmark. Additionally, getting my own bike and spending most of my weekends strolling around and meeting new people allowed me to gain a better understanding of the richness of Danish heritage and traditions, further deepening my understanding and appreciation for the country's customs and way of life.

As my time at Rigshospitalet progressed, I found myself growing more proficient in Danish and feeling increasingly connected to Danish culture. Through dedication, curiosity, and a willingness to engage, I was able to bridge certain cultural divides and form meaningful connections and conversations. Ultimately, my experience in Copenhagen left an indelible mark on both my personal and professional journey, shaping me into a more culturally aware and linguistically adept individual.

Finally, experiencing the work-life balance culture in Denmark has profoundly inspired me to prioritise a similar approach in my life back in London, where it is easy to fall into the trap of overworking. In Denmark,

there is a strong emphasis on achieving a healthy equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal well-being. Witnessing Danes prioritise leisure time, family activities, and hobbies alongside their work commitments has underscored the importance of fostering a fulfilling lifestyle that extends beyond the confines of the workplace. This emphasis on work-life balance resonates deeply with me, prompting a re-evaluation of my own priorities and a commitment to carving out dedicated time for relaxation, personal pursuits, and quality time with loved ones amidst difficult times for doctors in the NHS. Embracing this Danish ethos has sparked a renewed focus on holistic well-being and a determination to cultivate a harmonious balance between work and life in my own daily routine.

As always, Denmark has left a profound mark on me, and I always leave with new perspectives, ambitions and ideas. My time at Rigshospitalet has solidified my desire to move to Copenhagen one day, and I am excited to hopefully be back soon. With gratitude and anticipation, I look forward to the day when I can return to Denmark and embark on the next chapter of my journey in this incredible city.