

Elective Report

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Elective Supervisor: Professor Sean Whittaker

Elective Subject: Dermatology

Elective Site: St Thomas Hospital

Elective Period: 5 Wks.

Elective Objectives:

1. Describe the patterns of common skin cancers that is encountered in the elective and discuss this in a global health context.
2. Describe the health provision set in the elective.
3. Better clinical understanding of cancer in skin
4. Better professionalism practice in more clinical setting where expectation is closer to what would be expected from a FY1.

1: St John's institute of dermatology has its main focus on skin cancer particularly in cutaneous T cell lymphoma and melanoma. These cancers presents in rather similar ways in patients with different ethical background, melanoma starting with moles and cutaneous T cell lymphoma starting with rather vague skin patches. Cutaneous T cell lymphoma presents in mid to late age group and starts with scaly white pink patches on breasts, buttocks and legs which can spread to other areas of the body as the disease progresses. Melanoma's clinical pattern is more distinct, starting with a lesion that is not different to a mole visually however the lesion would slowly grow with changes in colour, diameter, and boarder shape patterns over time. Photographs of lesions are often used in order to compare the lesion in two separate time phases.

In global health context, the variety of patients' background was without a limit. London being one of the world's most diverse cities, I could definitely see the skin conditions in both Caucasians and Afro-Caribbean's. It would however be very interesting to collect prevalence's and prognosis of skin conditions mentioned above from different countries and study them as that will give a wider vision to what exactly global health in skin cancer is like.

2. The skin cancer centre was based in Guys St Thomas's NHS foundation trust and it worked just like what other NHS body would function. It had a team of consultants, senior doctors and specialist nurses of whom gets involved in follow up clinics and new patient clinics. Often the team works in partnership with oncology team on site and discuss complex patients' cases in order to bring out the most ideal treatment for the patient. Sometimes I could see that treatment was tailored to the patients' specific needs, for example tablet treatment being chosen for elderly and more aggressive treatment being chosen for younger patient group. This was quite an eye opening event for me to see as it shows how we can actually answer for different patients' needs.

3. Being part of the skin cancer team in St Thomas hospital, I believe I have gained greater understanding of skin cancers and how complex they can present. I realise that the clinical presentation of the condition may be a simple paragraph in a textbook however that paragraph can be a very complex paragraph in clinical settings. PUVA treatment was a popular choice along with radiotherapy and chemotherapy however deciding which is ideal for patients at different stages of the disease and their responses to previous treatment required a very deep experience in the field. It was very interesting to see the decision making process and I realise it is a much deeper subject than I have anticipated and I still am grateful for the opportunity I was given.

I also could gain further understanding of the graft versus host disease in skin that was very remarkable. The patient presenting at St John's institute are patients who are not doing extremely well, presenting typically with white scaly lesions in the mouth and rash like lesions on the skin and also on the scalp. This subject was applicable to very wide range of age group as it occurs in patient with transplant in the past. It was eye opening to see these cases that was not fully discusses in my studies so far.

4. Professionalism is a key asset to have when working as a doctor and this will not only benefit the team but also benefit the patients. It is most important as we are in a profession that attend to personal problems in health and constantly in contact with people. Although the clinics are overflowing with the patients and I can see how hard the team has to work, I could still observe the doctors maintaining their professionalism. They stayed calm, friendly to patients and never forget to look at the facts in each case without missing out important details. It would be very easy for us to 'slip-off' time to time as we are humans, however, I believe I saw a professionalism that I wish to learn in full from this team and I believe I have started to learn it too.

Keeping on time, being open and polite to members of the team and to patients, remaining calm under stress was in a way everyday practice during my elective. This slowly allows me to understand what other people may need and what I could do to help them. Being in a very busy team allowed me to practice above almost every day and I can say that it was a very rewarding exercise. I think it was a very good experience to have before I start working as a foundation doctor and I am very sure that this experience will come to be useful in that time.