

**Describe the pattern of illness in Cusco, Peru. How does this differ regionally and compare to the UK.**

During my elective period I spent most of my time shadowing various teams who worked on the general medicine wards. The ward highly resembled any found in an east London hospital; its patients included a lot of diabetics, cancers patients, pneumonias and complications of alcohol abuse. However similar the clinical history the clinical sign and symptoms demonstrated by the patients were a lot more severe and evident. The majority of patients had text book signs, signs which I've learnt over the years but never seen to such an extreme extent. Sadly, it was only at this extreme state that in patient care was deemed necessary, both by the medical team and patient's family, as financial restraints are a massive factor in seeking medical care.

From what I've gathered over the elective period, treatment in the UK is a lot more focussed on prevention, where as in Peru a consultant commented that the idea of prevention is still very new, mainly due to an almost non-existent public health sector.

As well as these common cases, there were also a lot of infectious diseases, an area of medicine I wanted to witness. Of note, tuberculosis and leishmaniasis were common in patients, with most leishmaniasis cases coming from inhabitants of the Amazon. It was pointed out to me that the cases of leishmaniasis were commonly seen in young men who left the city to go work on the farms. Leishmaniasis, unlike the rest of the medicine I witnessed, is not commonly found in the UK so this was a good learning opportunity for me.

**How well was patient services organised and acted on? Describe what you witnessed and how may this relate to your own level of practice.**

The access of care in Peru differs greatly from that in the UK. Patients start to queue up outside the hospital at 6am and request to see a specialist and very rarely access their almost redundant A&E. The hospital works similar to that of a GP surgery; if the doctor is busy, the patient is made to come back another day. When they are booked in, they can be left waiting all day. Waiting rooms with comfortable seating was not available. I will now draw on the experience I had with one doctor during the endoscopy clinics I sat in on to talk about the level of care.

The doctor stated that patients received an endoscopy if they'd be vomiting or if they wanted one. It appeared as straight forward as that. During the clinic at least two patients would be in the room at any one time – one preparing for an endoscopy, one having a consultation. Patient confidentiality is not something that has reached Peru quite yet, which really left me feeling rather on edge throughout the whole experience.

**Describe the care of a patient with an infectious disease not commonly seen in the UK.**

The most striking infectious disease that I witnessed was leishmaniasis. Leishmaniasis is a disease spread by the female sandfly and is commonly caught by residents of the jungle. The doctor noted that a lot of travellers also get the disease but the patients we saw were all locals, or people who had just left the city for the jungle in search of jobs.

The hospital handles leishmaniasis by placing the new patients in a sanatorium. The sanatorium, at the time of my elective, held five gentlemen in a very small area. The doctor introduced us and showed up the signs, including skin sores around the nasal cavities and throat. These patients were still in the

Philip Rowburrey, Elective Report.

acute phase; where as those with chronic infections were seen in a typical outpatient's clinic. Here, many were recovering from leishmaniasis due to successful treatment.

**How has the medical elective affected me and how will I draw upon this experience to make a better health care professional.**

Studying and practicing medicine in Peru has changed my opinion on clinical medicine here in the UK. I've always believed that the NHS is one of the greatest assets we have in the UK and its studying medicine in a country like Peru that emphasises this.

The most striking deficit of hospital life is the lack of hand washing and issues with cleanliness the hospitals have. The wards are very dirty and even though there were sinks, soap was not available. When asked to examine patients, the ward round, on average 25 people, would look bemused at our request for soap or alcohol gel. What's more, there are no curtains around the bed so fellow inpatients often join the ward round to check on their friends. Indeed, patient confidentiality did not exist, meaning I realised how much I'd value confidentiality as a patient and how I will ensure maximum safety with patient information.

The positives from Peru were the eagerness of the students to learn from their seniors. The majority of ward rounds lasted hours as the consultants were focused on both patient care and teaching. This is something I wish I witnessed more in the hospitals I've been a student at but far too often students are ignored and a vast expanse of learning experiences are lost. The same was evident in the clinics I went to and even with the language barrier between myself and the consultants they tried their hardest to teach and this was something I respected and vowed to do as a health care professional.

For those who may read this as they are interested in a trip to Cusco, Peru, the following paragraph is the information I wish I had found in the Elective Folder i.e. how to organise your trip!

The hospital I chose to go to was Hospital Regional, a public hospital in the heart of Peru. I emailed [anconti\\_24@hotmail.com](mailto:anconti_24@hotmail.com) and she was very helpful in organising our elective. However, the replies were very slow in returning to email with plenty of time to spare. I thoroughly recommend staying in Cusco as it is a lovely city and has a lot to do in regards to both medicine and activities, such as trips to the Amazon, Macchu Picchu and activities such as hand gliding, paragliding and white water rafting. Feel free to contact me at [philiprowburrey603@hotmail.com](mailto:philiprowburrey603@hotmail.com) if you have any other questions and most importantly, enjoy your elective!