

## Elective Reports

### **Describe the pattern of rheumatoid arthritis in China, and discuss this in the context with global health.**

There is approximately 0.3% of the Chinese population suffering from rheumatoid arthritis in China, whereas the prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis for UK is around 1%. The ratio between men and women who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis is around 1:3; this is similar in both countries. The treatment patterns between the two countries are quite different. In the UK, the main treatments for rheumatoid arthritis will be pain relief and DMARDs, whereas in China, western medication can be used with traditional medications including acupuncture. In Chinese hospitals, DMARDs are used at an early stage of the disease, and it is preferred to be the first-line treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. However, it is a very expensive medication, for those patients who do not have national health to afford the medications. In this case, Chinese medications and therapies are often more preferable by Chinese population in rural regions. Most traditional therapy available for patients with rheumatoid arthritis is symptoms control medication, very few treats the underlying structural deformity. Therefore, without adequately and efficient medications, rheumatoid arthritis can be very disabling to the sufferers. In UK, patients with rheumatoid arthritis are offer with counseling sessions, and support from the occupational physiotherapist. In contrast, although those services are available in China, but they are expensive, thus it is a huge financial burden on many Chinese patients, especially ones from a poor financial background.

### **Describe the pattern of health care provision in rural China and contrast with urban China and the UK.**

The pattern of health care provision in rural areas of China is very different from the UK. There are no GP services in China, thus all patient need to consult either the district hospital or the local pharmacist. Patients do not need any prescription for medications when they are buying medications from the pharmacist. Pharmacist in China plays a similar role as the GPs in UK. The advantages of the

Chinese health systems are patients with minor health problems gets seen very fast, as there are no waiting list in the pharmacy. Also there are no delays in patients with major health problem as they do not need to go through a GP service in order to be referred to any specialties. There are major disadvantages in the Chinese health care system. The fact that there are no prescriptions needed to buy certain medications, means the general population needs to have a good knowledge of the medications they are buying. Although pharmacies in towns and cities are relatively reliable in making the right diagnosis; for those from the rural regions, many pharmacies may not be as reliable. For example, I have seen a patient with hypertension, the rural pharmacy has given him hydralazine as a first line to control his blood pressure of 142/90, the mistake has eventually been noticed by doctors in the town hospital and his medication was changed. Therefore patients from more rural region are in comparison more vulnerable from harm as a result of wrong medications been given.

### **Health related objective.**

#### **Gain a good knowledge of rheumatologic disorders.**

I managed to learn more regarding varies types of rheumatologic disorders from teaching sessions organised by the hospital, also seeing patients with rheumatologic disorders. However, because there were not many rheumatologic impatient and outpatients, the education team at the hospital offered me more experience in Cardiology and general surgery.

### **Personal/professional Development goals**

Initially, I was unable to understand my doctor, as I do not know any medical terminologies in Chinese. I managed to gain more knowledge on Chinese medical terminologies commonly used in hospitals during my 5 weeks of shadowing by participating on the ward rounds,

---

---

---

---

---

discussing with my team any areas that I do not understand, and by doing large amount of reading and learning during my free time in China. Now I am more confident in presenting patients to the medical/surgical team and talking to patients in Chinese.

This experience has made me realise how big the difference is between the health care system in urban China and rural China. Many urban hospitals in China are very similar to UK hospital, in terms of the facilities and equipments available in those urban hospitals. However, many rural hospitals do not have the basic resources such as the resuscitation facilities.

There are many other aspects of the Chinese health care system that I find very interesting. Interpersonal skills and networking is extremely important in hospitals in many parts of China. There are more doctors graduating each year than the number of doctors required every year, hence the competition to obtain a job can be very difficult. Ones who have better networking have much more chance of obtaining a job in comparison to those who do not have any networking, even though they may be better clinicians than the ones with good networking. It is almost impossible to obtain a job after the 5 years of undergraduate degree in China; many have to go through 3 years of master degree before applying for jobs.