

Elective Report

Personal Information:

Student Name: Alison Curran

Dates of Elective Placement: From: 9th March – 17th April 2015

Host contact information

Name of Supervisor: Dr Ruth Shakespeare

Supervisor contact details: shakespeareeruth@gmail.com

Official Name of Hospital: Mulanje Mission Hospital

Address of Hospital: Mulanje Mission Hospital, Mulanje, PO Box 45, Malawi

Medical Speciality: Rotated around different wards including paediatrics, general medical and surgical, maternity and the community.

Title of elective report: Medical Elective in Malawi

Specify the personal learning outcomes for your elective as set out on your elective risk form. Relate each learning outcome to relevant Outcomes for Graduates as specified in the GMC document Tomorrow's Doctors (2009).

The doctor as a Scholar and scientist:

- Develop my knowledge of tropical medicine, in specific to medical diseases which are prevalent in Malawi
- Improve my clinical skills in preparation for F1
- Develop my knowledge of Obstetrics - a speciality I am particularly interested in

The Doctor as a Practitioner

- Learn how to communicate effectively and work in a team with those from a different cultural background
- Develop my confidence in diagnosing and managing medical conditions in preparation for F1

The Doctor as a professional:

- Learn how to work cross-culturally

Keywords (to assist future students with their elective searches):

Malawi

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My objectives and learning

- *Develop my knowledge of tropical medicine, in specific to medical diseases which are prevalent in Malawi* – I was able to broaden my knowledge of tropical medicine during my time in Malawi. 11% of the population are HIV positive so I learned about how these patients are managed and the complications of HIV eg Kaposi's sarcoma. I spent time in Palliative Care to see how patients with terminal conditions were supported. I spent time on the Paediatrics ward, the busiest ward in the hospital, where the majority of admissions were due to malaria. I was able to be actively involved in these patients management. The doctors put on weekly tutorials for the elective students, which covered HIV, malaria, cholera, snakebites and TB. This was really helpful, and greatly aided my learning.

- *Improve my clinical skills in preparation for F1* – I was able to improve my note-taking and organisational skills during ward rounds. I was able to improve my examination skills, particularly doing newborn and paediatric examinations. In particular I have improved my auscultation skills after listening to many children's lungs when they are crying! I was able to practice blood taking, vaginal examinations and catheter insertion. I also learned some new skills, including how to insert an ascitic tap, a pleural tap, do Malaria Rapid Diagnostic Testing and how to lumbar puncture.

- *Develop my knowledge of Obstetrics - a speciality I am particularly interested in* – I spent two weeks on Maternity, where I attended post-natal ward rounds and gynaecology, antenatal and obstetrics clinics. I spent time with a Malawian Clinical Officer who taught me about maternity care in Malawi. It was really interesting to learn how this differed to the UK. I was able to do catheter insertion, vaginal examinations and assist with vaginal deliveries and Caesarean sections. I feel that I have particularly improved my skills in palpating a pregnant abdomen and determining the lie of the foetus.

- *Learn how to communicate effectively and work in a team with those from a different cultural background* – I really enjoyed working with the Malawian Clinical Officers and learning from them. After a few weeks I felt I had very much become part of the team. It was interesting learning about how their training as clinical officers differs to our medical training in the UK. They also gave me much insight into some of the local cultural beliefs and attitudes that patients have towards healthcare, for example many of the local people believe that oxygen therapy can kill patients and there are very negative attitudes towards this. It was really interesting seeing how the Malawian Clinical Officers are trying to change this belief by counselling the patients that come in.

- *Develop my confidence in diagnosing and managing medical conditions in preparation for F1* - I was able to clerk new admissions and come up with management plans, which were then reviewed by one of the doctors before being put into place. This was made challenging due to the language barrier, and I usually needed one of the nurses/clinical officers to translate for me so that I could take a medical history. However, doing this was really useful in preparation for my F1 job, as I received feedback on my diagnostic skills and was given guidance as to how to manage patients. I feel that I have improved in confidence in this area.

- *Learn how to work cross-culturally* – I developed skills in working cross-culturally and enjoyed interacting with staff from a completely different background and culture. I think part of this was participating in the local culture - I learned some of the language (Chichewa), wore a Chitenje (wrap around skirt) when out and about, shopped at the local market and attended African church on Sunday.

Organisation of elective

I found Mulanje Mission Hospital (MMH) from a list of mission hospitals on the Christian Medical Fellowship website. I emailed its director Ruth Shakespeare (British Doctor) who replied promptly with helpful information about what a medical elective would look like at MMH and a guide written by previous medical students who had spent their elective there.

The medical elective was very well organised and structured. Dr Shakespeare arranged for somebody to pick me up from the airport when I arrived and also met me on my first day to organise a timetable for my six weeks at the hospital. The timetable was arranged so that I could get experience in each of the specialities (paediatrics, maternity, general medical and surgical and community). I was able to tailor the timetable so that I spent more time in the areas I was particularly interested in.

I spent time shadowing Malawian Clinical Officers and two doctors (one from Australia and one from Northern Ireland) and felt very well supported. A typical day at the hospital involved handover at 7.15am (where all the

clinical officers, doctors and nurses meet to discuss new admissions and deaths), morning ward round, seeing new admissions in the afternoon and carrying out tasks on the wards, and afternoon handover at 3.30pm.

Why I would recommend MMH and Malawi as a location for medical elective:

- MMH has a great team of doctors and Malawian clinical officers that make you feel very welcome. I felt very much part of the team and very well supported.
- I gained great clinical experience at MMH and saw many advanced clinical signs that I have never seen before.
- Mulanje is a beautiful location. On its doorstep is Mulanje Mountain, which you can explore at the weekend.
- Malawi has lots to offer, and many places to explore at weekends - Liwonde Safari Park, Zomba and Lake Malawi.