

Name: Anna Mansfield

Type of elective: Physiotherapy

Date of placement: 1st-19th June 2015

Hospital address: Kisiizi Hospital, Rukungiri, PO Box 109, Kabale, Uganda

Supervisor name: Atwongyere Night

Clinical objectives:

1. To consolidate knowledge gained over the last 3 years to prepare for Band 5
2. To learn how to work cross culturally
3. To learn about physiotherapy and healthcare in Uganda

How I organised my elective:

After hearing about the chance of support from AMECA and having wanted to return to Uganda since I went during school, I Googled hospitals in rural Uganda. I found Kisiizi Hospital and saw that they offered elective placements to physiotherapy medical and nursing students. I emailed and received a fast response from Hannah Spillman (elective coordinator). I also discovered friends who had visited Kisiizi Hospital and thoroughly recommended it. I hence accepted the offer of an elective placement.

Brief summary of my elective:

I spent 3 weeks on placement at Kisiizi Hospital and a further 5 days holiday at Queen Elizabeth National Park and visiting Ugandan friends in Kampala. I worked with the only physiotherapist in the hospital, a Ugandan lady called Night. In the mornings we worked on the wards seeing a variety of patients from post-operative, respiratory, HCOP, strokes and for the rest of the day we were based in the well equipped rehabilitation centre where patients came to us including musculoskeletal outpatients and neurological rehab patients who stay at the centre. Night also ran twice weekly keep fit classes for the hospital staff which were great fun. I stayed at Rose Cottage Guest House where I had my own room and all meals (mixture of local Ugandan and more western food) provided. It is a Christian hospital (although many visit who aren't necessarily Christian) and there are plenty of Bible studies and house groups to go to. I also got involved with playing volleyball and touch rugby on the primary school field. The area surrounding Kisiizi is beautiful and we went for walks in the mountains at weekends.

How I achieved my objectives:

1. **To consolidate knowledge gained over the last 3 years to prepare for Band 5** – due to the considerably fewer physios in African hospitals, it meant that we saw a huge variety of patients every day. This really helped me consolidate knowledge from my last 8 more specialised placements. Every new patient was a surprise so I was always kept on my toes! I saw many of the same conditions as in the UK but also many other things like

HIV and malaria as well as cases of domestic abuse leading to amputations and head injuries.

2. **To learn how to work cross culturally-** working with a Ugandan physio was great fun and gave me the opportunity to learn more about the culture. A student nurse helped me out with interpreting, and him and some of my rehabilitation patients helped me to learn some helpful phrases in Rukiga which meant I was able to see patients more independently and build up a better rapport. I also went along to hospital organised activities and sports as well as African church.
3. **To learn about physiotherapy and healthcare in Uganda** - I discovered that physiotherapy is a less well-known and respected profession in Uganda and many people don't understand what physiotherapists do. Patients often just want to be given drugs and don't appreciate more long-term rehabilitation. This is often due to lack of benefits and social help, so they need to be working to be able to feed their family. On community visits I learned that there is huge stigma around special needs and disabilities, as well a lack of support for families. Witch doctors and medicine are also still a problem in many areas, which can cause horrifying damage.

Challenges and overcoming them:

1. Language barrier – It was often difficult to communicate with patients even with an interpreter, especially when taking histories, as expressions and personality are hard to gauge. I tried to learn some of the language to overcome this, which patients seem to really appreciate.
2. Lack of resources – The hospital did have very good physiotherapy facilities and equipment, but we weren't able to give away walking aids to discharge people, which often meant longer stays in hospital.
3. Loneliness – For my first few weeks I was staying alone in the guest house (which is apparently very unusual). To keep myself busy I got involved with lots of activities and made friends with Ugandans and other Brits. I grew massively in independence and had a great time away, but I would maybe recommend going with a friend.

Recommendations:

I would thoroughly recommend Kisiizi Hospital as a location for any health care professional student choosing to do an elective in rural Africa. The area surrounding Kisiizi is stunning, being up in the mountains and 20 miles from the nearest tarmac road. The hospital is very well managed and the staff have good knowledge and communication skills.

Ugandan people are super friendly and hospitable. They love visitors to their country (especially when you attempt to speak their language!) and I was made to feel very welcome.

My educator, Night, is a brilliant physiotherapist but she has since moved to a different hospital so I cannot recommend the replacement physio as I have not met them.

There are also plenty of lovely places to visit at weekends or at the end, including Queen Elizabeth National Park (for safaris) and Lake Bunyoni.