

ELECTIVE (SSC5c) REPORT (1200 words)

A report that addresses the above four objectives should be written below. Your Elective supervisor will assess this.

Introduction

I attended The Royal Melbourne Hospital from the 6/3/2015-15/5/2015. During this time I was timetabled in to a variety of different theatre and pain management environments with the opportunity to observe and to be involved practically.

Chronic Pain

During my placement I have not actually had much opportunity to interact with patients in chronic pain. The pain ward round I attended dealt with more acute pain management, primarily patients on patient controlled analgesia (PCA) secondary to operations. One of the challenges I had initially here was the use of trade names instead of generic drug names. This differs significantly to practice within the NHS where generic drug prescribing is considered essential unless specific formulations are required e.g. lithium prescriptions. As to the causes of chronic pain in Australia compared to the UK I understand that there is a great deal of similarity. It was clear that although Australia is different from the UK in many ways, as a developed country some of the major health issues appear to be significantly similar. In the future I would like to spend time in more hospital environments less familiar which would allow me to develop an even greater understanding of how medical practice differs throughout the world.

Anaesthetic Techniques

The principles of anaesthesia are essentially unchanged from Australia to the UK. However I found there were some interesting differences. One of the first major differences which struck me was that in the Royal Melbourne the intubation was conducted with the patient on the operating table, and not in the anaesthetic room as I observed in the UK. I was interested to know what differences this made to the patients specifically to their pre-operative anxiety, and perhaps if I had more time I should have liked to perform an audit into patient pre-op anxiety levels both at the Royal Melbourne and then back in the UK. Other than that some of the drugs used differed slightly. I discovered that at The Royal Melbourne they use a lot more Rocuronium than I had seen in the UK, in part due to the access to Suggamadex here which is cheaper than in other hospitals allowing for easier reversal of muscle relaxation. I enjoyed the opportunity to learn significantly more about anaesthetics than I was able during my 3 week placement in the UK.

Pre-Operative Assessment

The pre-operative assessment is a vital tool used by anaesthetists both in the UK and in Australia. I found the questions and concerns raised in pre-op assessment in Australia to be extremely similar to those explored in the UK. This appears to be one area where both countries take a very pro-active approach in optimizing patients well in advance of their operation, to ensure that there are no unexpected complications on the day of the operation which may lead to cancellation or a worse outcome for the patient.

Anaesthetics as a Career

It has been a fantastic experience to spend 6 weeks working within the anaesthetic department at The Royal Melbourne Hospital. Thus building on the relatively limited time spent in anaesthetics during the MBBS course. I have been able to develop a much greater understanding of anaesthetics as a career, which has re-affirmed my ideas about pursuing a career in anaesthetics. I enjoyed the variety of cases I was able to spend time observing here as well as performing some practical procedures. I feel I have improved my cannulation technique and greatly improved my airway management skills. These will be useful skills to take into my FY1 year but also further into the future. Following on from this placement I feel much more prepared to be able to discuss principles of anaesthetic management and the fundamental parts of what a career in anaesthetics involves.

Melbourne compared to London

Before starting my placement here I was considering the possibility of working in Australia at some point in the future potentially for one year after my FY2 training was complete. The experience I have had within The Royal Melbourne Hospital has certainly increased my desire to spend more time working in Australia. I found that all the staff here to be extremely helpful, and that the hospital environment was more comfortable than I have witnessed in many UK hospitals. One difference which highlighted this was the much more frequent use of first names by Consultants and Registrars with other members of the team, making the team experience feel much more inclusive than one in which there is a very prominent hierarchy.

Conclusion

I have been extremely pleased with my elective placement at The Royal Melbourne hospital. It was well organized and provided ample opportunity to be involved practically and to gain a greater insight into anaesthetics. I would like to thank all the staff I have worked with at the hospital who made the experience extremely productive and enjoyable.