

ELECTIVE (SSC5c) REPORT (1200 words)

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

Introduction

The Mae Tao Clinic is a large organised clinic. It has gone from being a small, single building, makeshift treatment centre with a rice cooker to sterile instruments to a medical centre providing for the most common needs of both the Burmese under class and Burmese migrants in Mae Sot.

Mae Sot is a unique area of Thailand. It is located minutes from one of the busies Myanmar border crossings. Thai authorities are quite lax about migrants in Mae Sot. These migrants are a good source of cheap labour and Thai authorities charge them for work permits and visa extensions. Short term visas are also provided for migrants seeking assistance from the Mae Tao Clinic or other Non-Governmental Organisations in the area of Mae Sot, in which there are many. Strict checks however are made upon entering and exiting Mae Sot, making it an ecomically and ethnically unique area to Thailand.

Objective 1: Describe the pattern of disease/illness of interest in the population with which you will be working and discuss this in the context of global health: Describe the pattern of medical disorders in Mae Tao Clinic and how they differ with those in the UK.

Migrants do not have free access to effective health care. As such, many of the ailments seen in Mae Tao Clinic are common such as D+V, feeling unwell of unknown origin, fever, pneumonia, alcohol withdrawal, UTIs. However many of the differentials for these problems have a bigger focus on fungal infections, more so than in the United Kingdom. As such, antifungal treatments are routinely given along with broad spectrum antibiotics for a lot of cases of suspected infection. Patients often then need to stay as in patients to monitor treatment as it would be too difficult to cross the border back to Myanmar and return at a later date.

Objective 2: Describe the pattern of health provision in relation to the country which you will be working and contrast this with other countries, or with the UK: Compare the availability of resources between Mae Sot and the UK.

Mae Sot hospital relies on internation donors to do the work they do. The budget changes every quarter in line with current donor levels. The budget takes into account all day to day requirements of the departments. It also contains a limited budget for referral for complex cases to the local governmental hospital. This limited budget makes decisions about who to refer take its toll on the staff. While I was on placement, I witnessed how a baby with a congenital facial deforming defect had to be sent home with no further follow up of his condition.

Objective 3: Health related objective: What are the common surgical disorders encountered in Mae Tao Clinic and how do they differ from the UK?

The Surgical Department at Mae Tao Clinic is basic. Many small problems come in during the day such as minor trauma e.g. cuts, scolds, scabs. These minor surgeries are performed quite informally in a basic setting. Biopsies for tumours can also be undertaken at the minor surgery clinic. One theatre is present where they can perform hernia repairs.

Objective 4; Reflect on the experience gained at Mae Tao Clinic and how this may help me to become a better doctor in the UK

I gained a unique experience at Mae Tao clinic. Firstly, the amount they can do with limited education and equipment, resources and funds - it all came down to good basic clinic skills i.e. the history and the examination. Investigation are not routine and the scarcity of the funding situation must be respected. Secondly, witnessing these patients and the hardships they had faced had a profound impact on me. These patients, while seemingly happy and satisfied with life had little material possessions and little control over their life, even just control over the next few days is minimal. It was a hugely satisfying experience for me and I hope the impact of how little one needs to be happy stays with me. Thirdly, being part of the team and needing to make my own decisions and communicate them was clearly good experience for me in starting my junior foundation job.