

## **ELECTIVE (SSC5a) REPORT (1200 words)**

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

Sidra Medicine is a private hospital situated in Al Rayyan, not far from central Doha. It is an academic medical centre bringing together clinical care, research and education. This placement in paediatric gastroenterology at Sidra Medicine has exposed me to many different paediatric conditions that I do not commonly come across in the UK. Whilst there is a lot of overlap with paediatric conditions in the UK and Qatar, such as things like allergies, intolerances and inflammatory bowel disease, there are a few differences. These differences may be due to many reasons, but a main reason is due to different cultural practices which manifest themselves as health conditions. An example of this is tufting enteropathy. This is an autosomal recessive disease, usually congenital, that causes intestinal failure, electrolyte imbalances and impaired growth. It presents with early onset of severe intractable diarrhea, with most patients requiring total parenteral nutrition to acquire adequate calories and fluid intake for normal growth and development. This commonly affects patients with closer degree of consanguinity. In Qatar, it is not uncommon for parents to be related, which is why this condition is seen more commonly. It is also seen in other countries with higher rates of consanguinity such as Pakistan. This was something that I had not come across whilst on placements in England due to the lower rates of consanguinity in comparison.

The sedentary lifestyle in Qatar, mainly due to the hot climate, is also a very large contributing factor to the pattern of paediatric conditions that I commonly encountered during my placement here. The heat, especially during the summer months leads to limited outdoor physical activity, with more of an indoor lifestyle to escape the heat. There is also the reliance on cars which further reduces the opportunity for physical activity. Furthermore, there is a shift in dietary patterns towards more processed and refined foods. Combined, all these factors contribute to obesity, which is reflected in the children that Sidra treat. There is also an impact on other GI conditions such as chronic constipation being a consequence of these factors. As a result, when in clinic, promoting lifestyle changes made up a large proportion of consultations. In the context of global health, understanding the pattern of paediatric conditions in Qatar provides insight into the complex interplay of environmental, social and genetic factors that influence child outcomes. Efforts to address paediatric health challenges in Qatar can inform global health initiatives such as preventive healthcare and addressing social determinants of health.

Healthcare in Qatar is primarily funded by the government through the state budget. The government has allocated significant resources to healthcare, ensuring that Qatari residents have access to high-quality medical services. Paediatric treatment is completely free for Qatari residents, whilst visitors do pay a charge. Healthcare services in Qatar are delivered through a combination of public and private providers. The public sector, led by institutions like Hamad Medical Corporation, plays a significant role in providing primary, secondary, and tertiary care services. Private healthcare providers also operate in Qatar, offering additional options for those seeking specialized or alternative care. Sidra Medicine is an example of the private sector, which has led innovations such as being the first centre to offer a transitional inflammatory bowel disease clinic, for patients in their late teens suffering from IBD. This clinic has both paediatric and adult gastroenterology teams present to see the patients in person, which allows better continuity of care. In comparison, the UK's healthcare system is funded through taxation and national insurance contributions. The NHS provides healthcare services free at the point of use and is the primary provider of healthcare services in the UK. While private healthcare exists in the UK, particularly for elective procedures and specialist consultations, the majority of healthcare services are provided by the NHS.

Sidra Medicine serves a diverse population in Qatar, including residents, international visitors and individuals from high-status backgrounds. There is a lot of overlap of conditions seen between these

groups, as common things are common such as allergies, especially milk allergies. Residents of Qatar are of a diverse population which brings with it a variety of cultural and lifestyle practises that may influence health outcomes. For examples, certain cultural dietary habits may impact the prevalence of conditions such as obesity among children. Although all patients receive the same standard of care, sometimes certain groups, such as patients from high-status backgrounds, require more specialised input from other members of the hospital team. For example, it was fairly common to seek advice from the legal team regarding how to navigate these patient's care as these patients sometimes had specific preferences that may go against what the medical team would advise. Amongst all of these patients groups, environmental factors such as exposure to air pollution, extreme heat and lifestyle choices may contribute to the prevalence of conditions, as mentioned previously. Another important part of the management of the paediatric patients was taking into account the psychosocial impacts of their conditions and in general their social situation, to ensure that patients were getting the comprehensive care that they need and to prevent a cycle from forming, where their poor physical health affects them socially and so on and so forth. For example, although bullying isn't as common in Qatar as it may be in some Western countries, there is still a chance that some children may face bullying as a result of their conditions, such as soiling from chronic constipation. This may worsen their condition further so it was important to address this and provide specialised and personalised advice and support.

My objective coming into this elective was to gain valuable insight and experience in the healthcare system in a country whose culture is much different to what I am used to in England and exposed me to difference perspectives on patient care and healthcare systems. Similarly to NHS hospitals, Sidra Medicine has a diverse range of cultures, from patients and families to the staff working at the hospital. The multicultural society in Qatar presents a unique patient population with varied beliefs, values and healthcare-seeking behaviours. Every encounter with patients has been a learning experience, whether it's understanding cultural beliefs surrounding illness and healing or navigating language barriers to ensure effective communication. Coming from a Muslim background I was able to see how religion also played a role in the way in which patients and doctors communicated with each other, such as phrases used to praise God when discussing test results or prayers when discussing prognosis of conditions. This also meant that I already had a good level of cultural competence required to understand how to communicate with these patients as religion is at the forefront for many of these patients which came as an advantage. As I reflect on my elective experience in Qatar, I am grateful for the opportunity to have gained insight into the complexities of providing healthcare in a cross-cultural context. This experience has not only enhanced my clinical skills but has also fostered my growth as a culturally competent and empathetic healthcare provider.