

Ophthalmology Medical Elective in Thailand

Teerajet Taechameekietichai¹, Sunee Chansangpetch²

¹University Hospital of North Tees, ²Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University

Introduction

- I obtained an opportunity for an elective placement in the ophthalmology department at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital and Lerdsin Hospital in Thailand. The hospitals are located in Bangkok.
- King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital is one of the biggest public hospitals in Thailand. It has 33 departments, has over 1,250 in-patient beds and accepts referrals from all over the country.
- Lerdsin Hospital is a regional hospital for the Bang Rak District in Thailand and provide up to 500 in-patient beds. It is also one of the teaching hospital for the College of Medicine, Rangsit University.

King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital

Activities

- First-hand experience of a variety of infectious and tropical ophthalmic conditions, which deepen my understanding of ophthalmic diseases.
- Clerking patients in an Outpatient Clinic and Specialist Clinic
- Attended operation theatre and teaching sessions
- Assisting with research on the effect of vitamin on the progression of glaucoma



Wider Health Issues

- Patients need to travel a very long distance for healthcare because of lack of funding and resource available in their living area.
- Misunderstanding of health information/ strong superstitious belief.
- Patients have a lack of understanding of their condition and medications.



Conclusion

- Strengthen my understanding of the impact of cultural beliefs and practices on health beliefs
- Learnt different medical terms in Thai
- Engaging with international healthcare work will help me decide on including international health activities in my long-term career plan.
- Help me gain an insight into the impact of limited treatment or resource availability on people from the lower socio-economic stratus in comparison to those who can afford healthcare.
- Being able to experience different perspectives, protocols and approaches to ophthalmic diseases in a developing country will undoubtedly add a new dimension to my skills and clinical approach in the future.

Lerdsin Hospital

Activities

- Assisting and performing incision and curettage
- Attending teaching session with the medical student in the hospital
- Practising examinations such as indirect ophthalmoscopy and slit-lamp
- Give a presentation on the healthcare system in the UK



Wider Health Issues

- Due to the lack of resources and funds, the hospital does not have enough doctor to cover a large number of patients; thus reduce the quality of care.
- Lack of patients' confidentiality leads because of shared consultation and examination room.
- Lack of drug regulation; allow the patient to access steroid which worsens the infection

Case Example

A 64-year-old male patient undergoes a cataract-removal surgery. During the operation, there was a complication because of the miscommunication between the speciality trainee and the surgeon. Observing the situation, I realised that the trainee did not want to appear rude to the surgeon; hence did not correct the surgeon's decision in operation.

Reflection

This experience enhanced my awareness regarding the intricacies of practising medicine in a different culture, primarily the hierarchy that exists in Thai healthcare culture, where authority is dependent on seniority and social status. For instance, it is culturally unacceptable and considered rude for a person from a younger generation to challenge their senior and speak to them without proper etiquette. Through this elective, I become more aware of how healthcare systems with a strong vertical hierarchy influence patient care.