

Elective Report – Oluwatito Olaniyan

I completed my seven-week elective in the Emergency Department of York District Hospital. Although I hoped to complete my elective abroad, these seven weeks provided an invaluable opportunity which has ultimately helped shape my career aspirations.



As a student doctor, we aim mainly to observe and learn whilst not interfering with what is taking place. However, this elective enabled me to actively work as part of the team. Completing shifts alongside other doctors brought insight into what a career in A&E may be like.

There are 4 lessons this experience taught me which I would like to reflect on.

1. Team work is essential

To provide high quality patient care and promote patient safety, effective teamwork is crucial. The patient is more than their diagnosis and often interventions from other non-medical teams such as social workers and occupational therapists. As a multidisciplinary team, the Emergency Department is dedicated to achieving positive health outcomes for patients. Without effective teamwork, patients may not be effectively tended to and may end up coming back to the hospital.



2. Know your limitations

The fast-paced nature of A&E can be thrilling; you are exposed to a variety of conditions ranging from common to weird. On average York sees 300 patients per day and during the summer, there were often long queues stretching into the hospital walkway; this added pressure on the staff to help ease the backlog. Throughout this experience there were a few doctors that had to take time off due to burnout. This was a taste of the realities of medicine but also made me acknowledge the importance of knowing your limitations, people may feel the need to be a martyr, but it is imperative to patient safety that their care providers are at their best.

3. Listening goes a long way

One of the key moments during this elective was interacting with a chronically ill's patient's daughter. The patient had lung cancer and her condition was deteriorating; we had to explain this to her daughter, and she was understandably upset and frustrated. At this time, it was important to differentiate the source of her frustration which was the impact of the

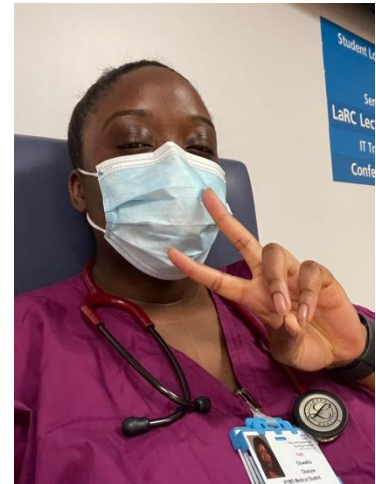
situation on her as the primary caregiver, rather than her being frustrated with staff. By listening to her we were able to refer her to the social team which were able to set her up with resources to help alleviate the burden.

4. Meet people at where they are

The demographic of patients entering A&E varied from young children with their concerned parents to the elderly (the oldest patient I encountered was 102!), all from various backgrounds. Amongst those that attended there were those who were considered regular visitors; though frustrating at times, I found that it was important to not be judgemental but try to understand the patient as a whole. My time at A&E also highlighted the social determinants of health such as living conditions, economic stability, access to health care and education.

5. You get out what you put in

I believe you truly get out what you put in, becoming a member of the team who was willing to learn and get involved, helped shape my experience and provided me with invaluable lessons along the way. I left this elective more competent in medicine and confident with patient interactions. By the end of this elective, I was seeing patients independently and coming up with management plans – I felt like a real doctor rather than a medical student. Though there were challenging aspects I believe they were vital to my growth.



Overall, I realised that a career in medicine is malleable. In a field that is vast and wide, there are endless possibilities of interest. Based on this 6 week experience I am considering a career in emergency medicine. I enjoy the variety of patients met, the complexity and the practicality it offers. It was also amazing seeing a female-led team all from varying backgrounds. I hope to one day become an A&E consultant leading my own team through a hectic but rewarding shift.