

British Association of Dermatologists Elective Prize/Project Grant Report
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Acknowledgements

Supervisors:

- Prof. Ikeda
- Dr. Hirasawa

I would first like to thank the British Association of Dermatologists for awarding me with this prize. It has allowed me to further explore my deep-rooted passion for Dermatology in a medical setting and environment so very different to home. The experiences I have gained were invaluable and will aid me in my pursuit of becoming a Dermatologist.

Overview

The elective at the University of Manchester is now the final part of our penultimate year in the programme. Having always had a desire to visit Japan for reasons including vast differences in culture, medical practice and vitally cuisine; I chose to organise my placement here. Having submitted numerous applications I was fortunate to secure my elective at Juntendo University Hospital, Tokyo. One of the tipping points for choosing this programme in particular was that this department had a Dermato-plastics team, which caught my intrigue due to my own surgical interests.

My aims for this Elective programme were to:

- Learn Dermatological practice in another HIC.
- Understand the role of a Dermato-Plastics Doctor, their path to such a career and compatibility with U.K. practices.
- Contrast and compare healthcare systems

Prior to arriving at the department I was notified that this team amongst being Dermato-plastics specialists were also known for their specialist interests in bullous pemphigoid (BP) and alopecia areata (AA).

The structure of my time with the Dermatology department mostly consisted of clinics, with conferences every Monday and a morning surgical list every Wednesday.

Before delving into the details of my time with Dermatology, I feel explaining the insight I gained regarding the Japanese medical system is necessary. The Japanese have a contributions based health care system, whereby the patient will pay 30% of the treatment costs and the government will subsidise the remainder 70%. There are exceptions to this rule such as the rarity, severity or chronicity of a condition which all reduce the contributions required by the patient. Whilst I went to Japan aware of

this system, the impact this has on use of healthcare startled me still. I regularly saw patients in the Dermatology clinic with late stage diabetic foot ulcers, as once assessed as stage IV the full cost of their treatment would be covered. This idea of suffering until something was severe enough to be treated was a sobering sight, and truly made my colleagues and I appreciate the value of a health service being free at the point of use.



Figure 1 – The Dermatology Clinic area. This corridor at the back connected all the clinic rooms allowing doctors and nurses to come and go as they needed.

Clinical Reflection

Every Monday there would be two conferences, which was essentially the term used for a gathering of all the doctors in the department. The first conference of the day would involve the head of the department being presented all the cases on the ward. They would then discuss whether the correct diagnosis has been reached and the next step in their management. What surprised me the most was that the head of the department never once met the patients, only seeing a timeline of photos of their skin from point of admission. Considering this was an equivalent to a consultant ward round, I found this difference in doctor-patient relationship as an in-patient quite astonishing. However, their emphasis on the teaching of the juniors was very pronounced. After each case, the Prof. would explain the case to the junior residents and medical students. It was during this time as well that the Prof. would explain the cases to me in English allowing me to also gain further benefit from the conference.

In the evening a conference would again be held at 6:30-8pm this time to discuss the most complex patients who are either in-patients or those yet to be referred. This would include a compilation of clinical history, examination, investigations and histopathology. During these sessions I was partnered with a Dermatology resident who would translate the cases for me as we went through them. These were interesting sessions that further developed my understanding of conditions such as Bowen's, Well's Syndrome and Bullous Pemphigoid.



Figure 2 - Evening Conference Session

As I mentioned earlier, one of the main reasons for choosing this programme was the opportunity to observe the Dermato-plastics team. This essentially encompassed a single individual who was both a qualified Dermatologist and Plastic Surgeon. In Japan there is no competition for speciality training if you want to do a speciality you just apply, and you'll be granted a training job. Each speciality takes 4 years residency before qualifying as a Consultant. Furthermore, if you end up wanting to change speciality, it's a quick process of just swapping and undertaking 4 more years of speciality training. It was due to this easy process of switching between fields that allowed him to be trained in both specialities. I found this notion of dual-qualified specialists really interesting especially considering there tends to be overlap between Dermatology and Plastics due to limitations in the Dermatologists scope of treatment. Due to my own desire to have specialist interests in surgical management of Dermatological conditions this experience made me wonder whether there was any opportunity for Dermatology to develop their surgical sub-speciality more extensively.

Personal Reflection

Returning from my trip I have a much greater appreciation for the NHS and sense of responsibility for protecting what it stands for. Being allowed the opportunity to explore Japan was an incredible privilege. I've not only left this experience feeling more developed as a global citizen but eager to learn more about the vast differences in Medicine and cultures across the globe. The colleagues whom I have met and the Dermatological knowledge and skills I've gained will undoubtedly aid my aspirations in this field.

I am truly grateful to the British Association of Dermatologists for granting me this prize, which has aided me in creating an unforgettable experience. It has allowed me to achieve my aforementioned goals and these experiences have most importantly cemented my desire to pursue Dermatology as a career.