

Elective Placement Reflection: Enhancing My Pre-Hospital Care Skills

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Ever since I started my medical journey, I have been fascinated by the dynamic and demanding field of emergency medicine. My elective placement in the UK has provided me with transformative experiences that have significantly influenced my understanding of healthcare delivery, particularly in pre-hospital care. I was lucky to be based in rural Scotland for parts of my placement in emergency medicine and general practice, whereby chance the current Chair of the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care lives and works! Given my interest, I was therefore also able to gain some insight and experience into pre-hospital care in Scotland, as well as the role of the Faculty. This allowed me to immerse myself in a diverse array of clinical and cultural settings, expanding my horizons and enriching my practical skills.

During my time in Culbin Medical Practice, I observed a highly efficient, adaptive, and specialised primary healthcare system. Unlike in Australia, primary healthcare in the UK is more streamlined due to robust regulations and enhanced cooperation between facilities. Shadowing GPs, nurses, and community outreach clinical teams, I witnessed the effective utilisation of multidisciplinary teams. The NHS may lack timeliness or responsiveness, but it compensates with consistency and thoroughness, broadening my appreciation for the differences between the NHS and the Australian healthcare system.

At Dr. Gray's Hospital in Elgin, the smallest District General Hospital in Scotland, despite the significant challenges faced by rural, low socio-economic areas, the Emergency Department remains very busy. These resource constraints lead to long waiting times and sometimes suboptimal health outcomes. However, my placement in the Emergency Department provided invaluable practical experiences, allowing me to enhance my clinical skills and complete several work-based reflections, applying theoretical knowledge in real-world settings under challenging conditions.



More than anything else however, it was the various adjunct attachments with specialist emergency services which truly expanded my horizons.

Emergency Medicine Training with the Cairngorm Mountain Rescue Team:

This training day illustrated the harsh realities faced by emergency responders in rural environments. High-stakes simulations amid rugged terrain emphasised the importance of clear, effective communication in coordinating rescue efforts and ensuring successful retrieval operations.

Retrieval 2024 Conference in Glasgow:

This event offered a plethora of insights from fascinating speakers, covering a wide range of topics from Formula 1 racing circuit emergencies to long-haul private patient transfers across Africa and India. The conference showcased the latest innovations in Retrieval Medicine, unveiling cutting-edge technologies poised to redefine global practices and standards.



Diploma of Retrieval and Transfer Medicine Examinations in Edinburgh:

Assisting in the administration of these exams provided a unique opportunity to understand the core competencies required for qualifications in retrieval medicine. I developed foundational skills in neonatal and paediatric retrieval, honed advanced life support



techniques, and learned critical physics principles relevant to air transport. Additionally, insights into aviation logistics and human factors deepened my understanding of the complex logistics underpinning patient transport.

North of Scotland (NoS) Trauma Network Conference in Aberdeen:

This conference enhanced my understanding of the logistical and clinical factors influencing the management and referral of complex trauma cases to tertiary treatment centres. Detailed insights into the coordination required for severe trauma cases emphasised the critical pathways and decision-making processes necessary for optimising patient outcomes.



RAF Lossiemouth Base Tour:

Interviewing seasoned retrieval practitioners at the base provided firsthand insight into the intense pressures of retrieval scenarios, including those involving direct enemy contact. This experience underscored the importance of situational awareness in retrieval medicine and the need to adapt to overarching circumstances.

Observing the Bristow HEMS and SAR Team in Inverness:

The extraordinary discipline and meticulous planning of this team ensured a constant state of readiness, maintaining a swift response time to any distress call. Their commitment to emergency readiness was evident in their ability to be airborne within 30 minutes of notification, 24 hours a day.

Scottish Emergency Medical Retrieval Service (EMRS) Base in Glasgow:

Developing an appreciation for how the rugged landscapes of rural and remote Scotland impact healthcare



access, I saw how these challenges escalate the complexity of emergency care. The EMRS West operations, responsible for the Inner and Outer Hebrides, enable emergency care to arrive in under an hour, a stark contrast to the days it might take without specialised aerial transfer services.

Throughout my elective, I became more confident in assessing patients outside typical hospital settings and managing them appropriately. The hands-on experiences and exposure to various emergency services have deepened my understanding of pre-hospital care and reinforced my desire to pursue a career in this field. The skills and knowledge I have gained will undoubtedly enhance my ability to communicate with pre-hospital crews during ambulance handovers and make me a better emergency physician in the future.

I am immensely grateful to the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care, and in particular Dr Pam Hardy, for facilitating this elective and providing me with this opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. This elective has cemented my aspiration to pursue a career in pre-hospital and emergency medicine, and I look forward to applying these experiences in my upcoming roles.

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