



Order of St Lazarus: Commandery of Wales

Week 3 Elective Report: Namibia

This is my last week in Namibia and it is amazing how quickly this placement has gone. I spent this week in Casualty and have seen a variety of conditions and have helped the medical interns with rapidly triaging patients. I saw an interesting case of a patient with laryngeal cancer who presented with an enlarged metastasis in the submandibular region. This scenario was ethically challenging as the family were not fully aware of patient's palliative status and caused distress when it was advised that he would not be operated on. In this instance I took the time to explain what palliation means. On reflection it realised how system pressure make it difficult to provide individualistic and holistic care in a pressured environment such as casualty and the importance of patient and family education particularly in cases with a poor prognosis. In addition to seeing chronic disease such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, I saw acute cases of meningitis, intracranial haemorrhage, scorpion, snake bites and gastroenteritis and hypertensive crisis. Often the management of these cases will be complicated by unclear previous drug/medical history or unknown HIV status. With the kind help of student nurses, I was able to take histories and examinations of my own patients. It was here I realised how little some patients understood about their medical condition which resulted in poor compliance with medications and follow-up. Further challenges to treatment adherence are the lack of extremely basic needs such as food , water, and electricity, making attending follow-ups a low priority for some patients. Casualty would usually get busier in the afternoon as many patients had travelled for hours to get to hospital and would come prepared with an overnight bag in case they had to be admitted.

Through this experience, I adapted to a new environment, widened my clinical aptitude, and had the chance to learn about different cultural practices, and immerse myself with a welcoming and kind community. I have been inspired by doctors and healthcare professionals who are doing so much with so little , and despite poor working conditions and pay. I have forced to be creative when communicating and examine patients and have been inspired by the innovation of healthcare professionals here too. I hope the lessons at Onandjokwe and Oshakati hospital will stay with me throughout my clinical practice and further shape me into a better clinician. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Namibia and would like to thank the Order of St Lazarus (Wales) again for this wonderful opportunity.

Lara Akinnawonu