Experiences of a Student Elective at McGill University

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ABSTRACT

It is often debated if medical electives are beneficial for students. While medical electives are not mandatory for students in the developing world, they are an important part of medical training in some Western universities (UCSD School of Medicine, n.d.) and have been part of UK undergraduate training since the 1970s (Cruikshank & Walsh, 1980). In the West medical schools form committees to guide, counsel, and help students plan their electives during vacations. In South Asia, the concept of electives is minimally encouraged; however, the students themselves share their elective experience and encourage other students to take electives, mostly through online forums. Electives often provide students a chance to work in a different setup, with different disease prevalence patterns, hospital management protocols, and learning experiences under various doctors with diverse problem solving approaches. It is also a two pronged tool whereby students can enhance their clinical skills and find opportunities to obtain a research project under the mentorship of research oriented academic consultants. This article is a brief sketch of experiences encountered by a South Asian medical student on a clerkship elective rotation in cardiology at a tertiary care hospital in Canada.

Keywords: Cardiology, Coronary Care Unit, Medical Student Electives, Medical Students, Undergraduate Medical Education

INTRODUCTION AND ELECTIVE OBJECTIVE

The enthusiasm of working as a medical student in a western setup seeded in me from the extensive research and updates in the field of medicine that keeps pouring from North America. Throughout my medical school I studied books written by western authors, and no wonder, it became my immense desire to work practically in a western setup. I chose McGill University owing to its renowned international status and high ranking of its Faculty of Medicine. During the period of my Electives I aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To gain an insight into the system of medicine being practiced in Canada and to evaluate myself for working as a resident in such an environment.
- To enhance my knowledge, clinical skills and develop creativity for problem solving in the field of Cardiology.
- To gain knowledge of diseases more prevalent in Western countries and less prevalent in South Asia for practice based learning and improvement.
- To develop interpersonal and communication skills for effective information
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