



Mumbai Experience

BAPIO Research and Innovation Competition 2018 Winner

Khadijah Ginwalla

Year 4 MBChB University of Bristol, UK

I would like to begin by thanking the BAPIO team, especially Dr R Mehta for providing me with the amazing opportunity to travel to India for the 12th Annual GAPIO conference and securing an observership at the largest government hospital in Mumbai. I began my ophthalmology placement almost immediately, at the Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General hospital, which is fondly referred to as “Sion Hospital’ by the locals. I was lucky enough to witness first-hand how a hospital with over 1.5 million outpatients operates in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

The facilities and equipment used are very basic, however the principles of how patients are managed are very similar to those of the NHS. In the outpatient patients are first triaged by junior doctors who write the initial investigation and management plan. Once investigations have been conducted (usually within a couple of hours), they are passed onto senior consultants who will proceed to go over what has been done and plan what happens next in the patient journey.

On the wards, I was privileged to see a huge variety of patients including those from the local Dharavi slum, considered one of the largest slums in Asia. The eye problems ranged from cataracts, ectropion, glaucoma to complex corneal traumas. The principle of confidentiality is somewhat lost in such busy hospitals, where doctors and healthcare professionals refer to patients as pathology, and their history and examination is taken in rooms full of other patients or their weary family members.

The style of consultations seems very paternalistic in India, whereas the NHS has moved to a more patient- centred approach to healthcare delivery. There were no theatre list administrators or coordinators as such, and so it fell upon the registrars and juniors to get together and compile the list for the following day. This included preparing the anaesthetists beforehand over WhatsApp and skipping lunch to come prepare patients. The speed at which everything was organised continued to amaze me, especially after I was informed that Sion hospital performs world-class surgeries for a fraction of the western world’s price.

I was given the unparalleled opportunity of being in theatre with a highly-skilled surgeon, who completed cataract operations in less than 10 minutes with ease, whilst simultaneously directing the junior doctors on the other side of the room, of how to best perform a dacryocystorhinostomy on another patient. With classic Bollywood tunes playing in the background and the soothing sound of the ECG monitor beeping away, this placement was an eye-opening and truly heart-warming experience. It really embodied the Indian value of making the best of any situation even when stretched to the limits.



Following my placement, I was given open access to the three-day GAPIO conference which featured pioneering speakers and for the first time ever, the President of India, Shri Nath Ram Kovind himself! The talks were inspiring and intellectually stimulating from new surgical procedures and techniques, to interesting case reports and alternative management strategies.

The round tables were bursting with innovative ideas as how best to address the global shortage of healthcare professionals, with many international heads of prominent organisations present. It wasn't all hard work however, there were plenty of light-hearted moments in the evenings, cultural song and dance and an exclusive fashion show! I am forever humbled and indebted to have been offered such a life-changing opportunity and would sincerely like to thank all those who worked so tirelessly to make this possible.