

## PHEM Facilitated Elective Reflection



Ever since doing my intercalated BSc in Emergency, Pre-hospital and Immediate Care, I've had the 'bug' for pre-hospital medicine. I was very fortunate to secure this opportunity through the Faculty of Pre-Hospital Care and my main aims were to see a wider field of pre-hospital interventions through time spent with the varying resources of WAST.

I wanted to become more confident in assessing a patient outside of the typical hospital setting and in managing such patients appropriately. I wanted to gain more insight into the pre-hospital process and what it takes to safely discharge a patient at scene.

During my facilitated elective in South Wales, I gained a much better understanding of how emergency ambulances, CHARUs (Cymru High Acuity Response Units) and HART (Hazardous Area Response Team) all serve the local population's needs. I particularly enjoyed my couple of shifts with Medserve, a volunteer-run charity that provides enhanced care and is a branch of BASICS.

I saw how pre-hospital care is evolving through the use of prescribing advanced paramedic practitioners who aim to prevent a patient's unnecessary admission to A&E. This made me think whether pre-hospital medicine is the right term anymore since this assumes the patient will always be conveyed to hospital, whereas modern paramedics always aim to avoid this if possible as independent practitioners.

The realisation of the inherent always at-risk nature of a paramedic's job came to me through one stand-out experience. Responding with CHARU to a seizure recovery at a scene with very angry relatives possibly under the influence of drugs was a scary first

for me. I saw that one's safety is always a priority yet it is not always possible to ensure 100% safety. I saw the importance of de-escalation tactics and cooperation with the police during such scenarios. This differs so much to hospital life where there is always extra support available whereas paramedics are often solo responders.

With Medserve, I worked alongside very experienced paramedics and doctors who taught me a lot about their roles and other avenues within medicine. We cooperated with EMRTS (the Wales HEMS service) and had some teaching about RSIs whilst I also learnt the importance of scene management and how to manage a difficult extrication – a skill you don't see in medical school. I also gained more experience on how cardiac arrests are managed in RESUS and the importance of teamwork and structure in such situations.

The day with HART was very interesting, valuable and ultimately fun. I developed my knowledge of their critical role during certain incidents and was even able to try on a lot of their equipment, including ballistic vests and contamination suits, whilst also undertaking obstacle courses within confined space in pitch-black darkness. Trying to cannulate with their very non-dextrous suit gloves made me appreciate how difficult their job can be logistically.

My PHEM experience was so different to a normal day of placement at hospital and I gained so much more depth of knowledge about the role of pre-hospital practitioners. I found it comforting being with one patient at a time but there is so much more uncertainty into patient management without all the in-hospital investigations and therefore appreciate the skill to be able to safely discharge patients at scene.



I think my confidence in assessing patients at scene grew greatly over my elective. I had to rely on my intuition a lot more, using only the clinical picture without the normal test results / radiology, and I think this will help greatly in future.

With this newfound greater appreciation, I believe I will be better able to communicate with pre-hospital crews during ambulance handovers during my upcoming ED job, since I now know more of the structure of WAST and the working life of paramedics. My highlight is probably my time spent with Medserve since I was able to independently assess a patient at the scene of a RTC and I've always wanted to wear a red jumpsuit!

Overall, I believe the exposure this elective gave me will make me a better doctor. Equally as important, I very much enjoyed my experience – going down the M4 at 90mph+ on blue lights was very different to a normal day of placement! - and I hope it will serve me well in the future. I met some really great people who were even better

professionals. I was very lucky to get this opportunity in a field I am genuinely very interested in and, above all else, this elective has cemented that I would love a career within PHEM in the future.

With thanks to Nathan Moruzzi (WAST Senior Paramedic) as well as the FPHC for facilitating this elective.