

Prompt (Internship Category): What have you learned about this organization through your capstone?

Audience: Friend/family member

Through my internship at the Whittington Hospital in London, I learned that the National Health System (NHS) in the United Kingdom is overtasked. The majority of my internship consisted of performing hand-washing audits and observing the everyday occurrences of the accident & emergency (A&E) department. The time that I spent in the A&E department allowed me to observe the economically-diverse population that was treated at the Whittington Hospital, because of the hospital's unique geographical location, straddling a line between lower- and middle-class populations. On any given day, I observed the A&E department exceed capacity due to patients wanting routine check-ups while mentally ill, drug abusers, and trauma victims streamed in the doors alongside them. On many occasions, I observed times when all available rooms and cubicles were full and less-critical patients were asked to wait in the waiting room for others to be treated. I watched patients in the waiting room get up after waiting for eight hours to be seen and scream about the unfairness that no doctor, receptionist, or nurse had the power to change, effectively making all hospital staff bystanders observing how the overstretched-resources of the A&E department fail. I was a spectator at the hospital the morning a mentally ill patient ran through the ambulance entrance and was dragged back to a behind-schedule psychiatry consult, and then the morning after, another patient did the same thing, but this person ran in front of a bus and committed suicide. The experience of observing the A&E department affected me greatly. I rethought what it is to be a healthcare provider and the overall attitudes of a seasoned provider. What I realized was that I would never be happy in a profession that was centered on seeing patients like a rotating door, with no built relationship between the provider and the patient. My overall conclusion of the NHS is that it is abused by patients to the point that it cannot handle the extreme number of patients in their hospitals, many of whom only need refills on prescriptions and cannot wait to see their primary care physicians (because it can take up to two weeks). It was frustrating realizing this because in the United States, often we talk about socialized medicine as an answer to our healthcare system's problems. In reality, the NHS has problems that cannot be solved easily due to the structure of the system. In the end, although expensive, I am happy with the healthcare that the United States provides, but acknowledge all of the problems that our system still faces. All healthcare systems have their drawbacks, and from what I observed, the NHS's drawback is that it is overworked.