

**Name:** John Xu

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**Specialty:** Intensive Care

**Country:** Argentina

**Location:** Buenos Aires

**Rural/Urban:** Urban

**Hospital or non-hospital placement:** Hospital

**Type of placement:** Pre-clerkship

**Date:** July 4 – August 19, 2011

**Project title:** SEA Health Trip

**Organization:** Hospital Churrucá, Buenos Aires & GIC Argentina

**Website:** <http://www.gicarg.org/Programs/Internships-Argentina.aspx>

**Main language spoken:** Rioplatense Spanish

**Other language(s):** English

**Project description:** Global Health Observership in this ICU consisted of mostly observing: rounding on patients, learning about how they are managed, observing procedures, and some physical examinations.

**Student experience description:** This experience illustrates the important influences that social, cultural, and political forces can have on public health and the delivery of healthcare. As a first year medical student, there is not much one can do to help solve medical problems encountered on the wards, so one is limited to mostly an observer role, although you may get a chance to practice some physical examination skills and learn to pick up findings. I learned more about management and disease progression by being able to follow patients for days or weeks (while observerships here are typically only a few hours per session) and reading around interesting cases.

**Placement safety:** Yes you will feel safe. Buenos Aires has dangerous neighbourhoods similar to any large city in North America, so just follow common sense.

**Educational experience (out of 10):** 7

**Social/cultural experience (out of 10):** 9

**Does the organization have any religious affiliations?** No

**At any point did you feel expected to participate in religious activity?** No

**Program fee:** No, but I took Spanish lessons through this organization, for a fee.

**Dress code:** Purchase your own pair of scrubs to wear in the hospital

**Accommodation:** Student residence or shared apartment

**Accommodation cost:** Approx. \$15

**Helpful hints:** This is a great cultural experience if you want to see how medical care works in a very different society. There are some interesting medical cases to be found too, but this would probably be better appreciated in more advanced stages of training. You will be given minimal direction about what you will do day to day, so be self-motivated to shape this experience into something that appeals to your own interests/learning objectives. Many doctors speak English there, but the more Spanish you know or learn prior to departure, the more involved you can be when you arrive. I arrived without any prior knowledge of Spanish, took courses through GIC, and was able to get by.

**Questions you are glad to have asked before leaving on placement:** About language requirements, flexibility of the program to accommodate my schedule and learning objectives.

**Questions you WISHED you asked before leaving on placement:** If traveling to other nearby countries, be sure to check VISA requirements and arrange those before departure, as things can be very difficult to accomplish in less efficient local systems.

**Overall, would you recommend this placement for future students?** Yes