

Name: Deepti Chopra

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Specialty: Family Medicine

Country: Peru

Location: Lima

Rural/Urban: Rural

Hospital or non-hospital placement: Non-hospital

Type of placement: Pre-clerkship

Date: July 28 – August 25, 2011

Project title:

Organization: Solidarity Experiences Abroad

Website: <http://www.brocku.ca/campus-ministries/solidarity>

Main language spoken: Spanish

Other language(s): English

Project description: Solidarity Experiences Abroad (SEA) aims to provide students with international experience in social justice and career development through a multitude of community projects. Clinical and social aspects of Peruvian culture will both be explored. Our volunteer placements have been organized to take place primarily in the shantytown communities of San Juan de Miraflores and Pamplona Alto. This includes a placement at the local walk-in clinic, Policlinico Sagrada Familia, which provides health care to more than 60, 000 local residents. Here, we will shadow physicians as they treat patients, observe clinical administration, and gain personal experience working with patients and providing care. We hope to be able to make some home visits and broaden our exposure to the living conditions in the surrounding areas. We will also have the opportunity to shadow physicians at other centers, including public and private hospitals, as well as the small clinics near the shantytowns (this needs to be discussed with the organizer prior to leaving). Moreover, we will be able to run a variety of health campaigns for the shantytown communities, including a Children's Health Check-up Project, Dental Hygiene Campaign, Blood Pressure Clinic, and a Vaccination Campaign.

Student experience description: In terms of the objectives I was able to meet, I certainly educated and exposed myself to a new way of life and approach to health and disease. I learned that there is a concept of health in Peru. Even in the most distant areas of the shantytowns, people are aware of the idea that sickness is difficult and painful, and almost everyone wished for health care. It was interesting to note that even in the more remote areas, people have come into contact with health care, or friends and neighbours who have received care, and seek out the same for themselves. I was able to provide basic health care in these settings and use some of my clinical skills. Moreover, religion appears to play a large role in uniting communities and giving people hope in the face of adversity. It was fantastic to see the power of religion in a patient's health status and outlook on their illness. The majority of the country is Catholic and this seemed to directly affect their behaviours and attitudes towards their living circumstances and health status. I was also glad to see the work of speech pathologists and gain a deeper understanding of their role in patient-centred care. There was definitely an element of interprofessionalism to this trip although I feel there could have been much more. I also did not get to see the pressures placed on nurses and physicians working in urban clinics and hospitals as I was not exposed to these environments. I would have liked to see the challenges they face on a daily basis and

how they manage these in the city. However, I particularly enjoyed feeling immersed in Peruvian life. The accommodation, visits to the grocery stores, and use of Spanish made me feel like I was living in Peru as more than a tourist and allowed me to entrench myself in some of the day-to-day experiences.

Placement safety: Yes for the majority of the time. Transportation and supervision was always provided for us when we visited the shantytowns on our health campaigns.

Educational experience (out of 10): 8

Social/cultural experience (out of 10): 10

Does the organization have any religious affiliations? Yes

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

Program fee: \$4000-5000 (includes airfare, accommodation, and most meals)

Dress code: Conservative but casual. Warm clothes. For the health campaigns, scrubs were required. Just bring a few nice clothes.

Accommodation: We stayed in a retreat house/hostel. It was big and clean but very cold. Hot water was not guaranteed.

Accommodation cost: Included in program fee

Helpful hints: Bring warm clothes and lots of snacks! Write a journal. Bring a lot more money than you think you need. I would say \$1000 dollars.

Questions you are glad to have asked before leaving on placement: What is the weather like? Is there internet/telephone access? Should we learn Spanish? What is the shanty town like?

Questions you WISHED you asked before leaving on placement: What exactly is the food like in Peru? Where will all of our meals be coming from and what exactly is provided for us?

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