

Speciality: Surgery

Country: Peru

Location: Lima

Rural/Urban: Rural

Hospital or non-hospital placement: Hospital – also orphanage

Type of placement: Pre-clerkship

Date: 07/01/2010 to 08/01/2010

Project title: IFMSA SCOPE Exchange

Organization: IFMSA-CFMS

Website: www.ifmsa.net/public/ecscopeselect.php

Main language spoken: Spanish

Other language(s): English

Project description: Clinical elective/observership of general surgery.

Student experience description: While in Peru I had several opportunities to observe the similarities and differences between how medicine is practiced in developed nations compared to in developing nations. There was an amplitude of learning by observation on clinical rounds, in surgery and in the emergency room. However, there was very little teaching or hands-on learning. The organization of my arrival, home-stay and social programming was very limited and this was frightening coming into a foreign city where I knew very little about the culture or language. I made wonderful friends who took me under their wing and translated in the hospital for me and also showed me around Lima.

Placement safety: I only felt safe when I was accompanied by my host family or with other medical students who lived in Peru. Without speaking the language or knowing which areas of the city were safe for tourists, or women traveling alone, I was afraid to make a mistake and put myself in danger. I was afraid mainly because of Lima's reputation for robberies, violence, muggings, terrorism and kidnappings and not because I personally experienced any of these things firsthand.

Educational experience (out of 10): 2

Social/cultural experience (out of 10): 10

Does the organization have any religious affiliations? No

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

Program fee: Yes, and all travel and most meals.

Dress code: Very casual in the hospital. Conservative clothes especially for women.

Have to provide your own scrubs and dry-clean them yourself.

Accommodation: I was placed in a Peruvian medical students' home about an hour away from the hospital I was to work in, which made safe transportation to and from the hospital an issue. I was so lucky to be with this family because they really made an effort to show me their culture, and teach me about Peru. They took me in like a daughter and my trip would have been terrible without them. It was really good luck though because other students home-stay placements didn't work out as well. A group of students also rented an apartment in the city together.

Accommodation cost: \$500 – gifts for the family.

Helpful hints: Really be persistent in establishing your accommodation and placement information prior to departure. I wasn't told where I was going or who I would be living with until the day I flew out of

Toronto and it was only because I badgered them for the two weeks leading up to my departure. I think if I hadn't they would have completely forgot I was coming.

I think anyone who wants to work in a foreign city really needs to make an effort to learn the native language prior to going. My learning was severely limited because I couldn't speak Spanish.

Questions you are glad to have asked before leaving on placement: Where am I staying? Is it safe? What do I need to bring with me to the hospital? What safety precautions should I take while traveling within the country and at the hospital?

Questions you WISHED you asked before leaving on placement: How beneficial would it be to be able to drive myself to and from the hospital? How can I get in touch with the other exchange students placed in the same location?

Overall, would you recommend this placement for future students? No