

Name: Sahil Koppikar

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Specialty: Family Medicine

Country: Peru

Location: Lima

Rural/Urban: Urban

Hospital or non-hospital placement: Non-hospital

Type of placement: Pre-clerkship

Date: July 25 – August 28, 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 community development projects. Our experience in Peru was designed to be multifaceted, with both, clinical and social aspects of health being explored. Our volunteer placements were organized mainly in the shantytown communities of San Juan de Miraflores and Pamplona Alta. We participated in a variety of campaigns that were conducted directly in the shantytowns, which included a Health Check-up Project, Dental Hygiene Campaign, Blood Pressure Clinic, and a Vaccination Campaign. In previous years, placements have included the local walk-in clinics, where you can shadow physicians as they treat patients, observe clinical administration, and gain personal experience working with patients and providing care.

In addition to the clinical aspect, the program provides Spanish classes and cultural experiences in order to understand the social and cultural issues surrounding health within the communities that we work.

Student experience description: As an undergraduate medical student, I was able to work with a general practitioner (physician) as he conducted clinics within the shantytowns. We were allowed to conduct histories and do physicals, after which we would report back to the physicians. He would discuss management plans with us, and it would be told to the patient. It was a good experience, especially in a resource poor area, where clinical judgement is primary with a lack of investigations and tests. It helped develop history taking and physical examination skills. We were also able to talk to the physicians, nurses, and social workers in that area, helping to gain an appreciation for the social and cultural aspects that play a role in the health of the patients.

I would have liked to have gotten more exposure to the hospital and clinic setting in Lima, as it would have been interesting to see how their health care system works differently than ours. In previous years, this opportunity had been provided.

Placement safety: Yes - we were living in a fairly middle-upper class area within a retreat house which had security. During all our travels we had private busses/cars with drivers so we never had to take public transit. There was always a member of the organization (local Peruvian who spoke English) during all our travels. In general, we felt very safe and never did it seem like we were threatened by anything or anyone. **Educational experience (out of 10):** 7

Social/cultural experience (out of 10): 9

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: Within the shanty towns casual wear is ok. We wore scrubs most of the time in the shanty towns. In clinics might be expected to wear dress clothes (dress shirt and dress pants)

Accommodation: We lived in a retreat house within a private school. It is well maintained, clean and the people working there are really helpful. Food (all 3 meals) are included within the accommodation cost. There are multiple rooms, clean washrooms, lounge areas, prayer rooms (if needed) and various athletic facilities (soccer fields, basketball courts, volleyball nets).

Accommodation cost:

Helpful hints: Since the majority of people speak Spanish, it would be good to gain a basic understanding of how to communicate in Spanish. Basic language skills would be ok. All the organizers, and doctors we worked with spoke English. Make it clear what your objectives are to the program organizer (Raoul M.) so he can provide you with clinical experiences that you want. If you want a mix of shantytowns and hospital work, or only shantytowns, etc.

Questions you are glad to have asked before leaving on placement: What type of dress code is expected? Will dietary restrictions be a problem? (No - they are very accommodating) How will the weather there be like? (Cold and Humid)

Questions you WISHED you asked before leaving on placement: Do we need to know basic communication in another language?

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