

Panama: Exploration of multiple health care settings and Spanish immersion

Danielle Gonzales, MD

Children's Mercy Kansas City, Kansas City, Mo.

Background

- Panama offered a unique experience of urban and rural settings as well as the opportunity for Spanish immersion

Objectives

- Describe how health care is carried out in an international setting
- Compare the differences between how medical care is carried out in urban and rural settings
- Identify disease pathology that is not common in the US
- Meet residents at similar training levels and learn from them
- Improve Spanish skills
- Compare the Panamanian culture and food to the US

Preparation

- Canopy Spanish
- Global Health lectures and simulation sessions
- Developed goals for the rotation and strategies on how to combat difficulties

Experience

- Spent 1 week at Hospital del Niño in Panama City, Panama
 - Split time between the general pediatrics wards, NICU
- Spent 1 week at a local clinic in Panama City, Panama
- Spent 2 weeks in a rural location: Chitre, Panama
 - Split time between the general pediatrics wards, Pulmonology clinic and Neurodevelopment clinic
- Met pediatric residents
- Explored Panama on the weekends

Reflection

- Fantastic elective!
- New disease pathology seen
 - TB and Dengue fever
- Information learned about medical system
 - Children's book given to every parent with information on nutrition and other topics, as well as their child's growth chart, birth history, vaccines, etc.
 - Iron supplementation program: to prevent iron deficiency as Panamanian food is deficient in iron
 - Vaccine program
 - Growth charts are different than those used in US
 - Emphasis on exclusive breastfeeding
- Welcoming nature of residents and attendings
- Residents work extremely hard in Panama
 - Difference in how medical school is structured
 - Differences in how expensive medical school is and how well attendings are paid

Future Directions

- Incorporate global health into my career
 - Fellowships with global health opportunities
 - Helping Babies Breathe and Doctors Without Borders (MSF)
- Continue improving my medical Spanish to work with all patients within the US


