

Recognition of Distinction in Global Health

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Clinical Elective: Dominican Republic

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The Dominican Republic is a beautiful country, and I consider myself incredibly lucky to have been able to spend a month here! It's been amazing to get to know the students and the culture here, and to dust off my Spanish skills some too. We first met some of the students on our first day in the Dominican Republic, after flying in and taking an INTEC-provided shuttle to Baní, where we were spending our first two weeks. A few of them lived in the same housing complex as we did, and over the course of the two weeks, took us to many of their favorite places to spend time in Baní!



Our first day at the clinic was the next day, and our group split up to stay at two different ones. Ash, Divya, and I went to the Servicio Nacional de Salud CPNA Santa Rosa Clinic, where we were able to see primarily clinical care in a rural setting. We saw how the clinic flow varied daily, with some days being full of bustle from one patient room to the next, and others being slower days with hardly anyone coming in. The range of different healthcare needs was immense, with patients coming in for anything from the management of chronic conditions to active infectious disease concerns, to treatment for deep wounds and cuts, to family planning counseling. On our first day, we were able to follow along with the physician as she was completing a death certificate and went with her to both the morgue and the regional Public Health Office to complete a record with the statistical office. There, we were able to speak with local employees about the most common causes of death for this community, and about the initiatives and efforts that they were implementing specific to their patient population.

We were also able to see these initiatives in action! On our second week in clinic, we arrived to see a huge food truck outside. Although not the first one we'd seen in the DR, this one was one of the government's. It was free and served nutritious food to anyone who came by; they'd stationed it at the clinic today because of its role as a community gathering point. Many people came into the clinic that day as well, to check for their blood pressures or blood sugars, as well as to seek out care for other concerns. We met the senator of Baní at this event, and were able to introduce ourselves and share what we'd been learning about at the clinic.

By coincidence, we met him again that week, at the local mango festival! We ran into him while passing through, and he took us to a tent where you could taste many different varieties of mango. Between the mangoes that we bought there and those that were given to us by others, we were happily in no shortage of the fruit. Our trip to the festival was on the recommendation of the students, and they showed us to many other places with them as well! These included the nearby beach, Palmar de Ocoa, as well as the Centro Cultural Perello, an art museum. Over the two weeks, we were able to try so many different new things and spend time getting to know the local students. They are all amazing and were so delighted to teach us everything, from different slang to Dominican dances, to their schooling process and cultural history.



The conclusion of our two weeks in Baní was both bittersweet and exciting. I would miss the environment of the local clinics, but was also excited to see Santo Domingo's hospitals. We had done so much in our clinics in Baní, including both primary care clinical work, and also research with the students on surveying patients on skin health and sun protection. On arriving, Santo Domingo was immediately different; larger and full of so many more things to do.

I rotated for both my OBGYN rotation and surgery rotation at Hospital Marcelino Velez, and was able to see and participate in an OR setting for the first time! The first birth I've ever seen was at this hospital, and that of twins, which was especially moving for me. My siblings are twins, and I personally remember being old enough to see them at the hospital when they were born and to watch them grow up into the teenagers they are now. The parallels between my experience both then and now were profound, and I am honored to have been witness to that procedure. We were able to see a few more births as well, and I was able to scrub in as an assist for a c-section. I didn't think I would enjoy it at first, but I've found that I



love surgical procedures and the OR a lot more than I thought I would, so these two weeks were incredibly insightful as part of my specialty interests!

In addition to those experiences, we shadowed with the physicians and saw many additional aspects of the hospital, including consult rooms, floor rounding, and special care units. There was a wide range of things, including diabetic foot operations, pediatric and adult emergency room procedures, post-partum, labor and delivery rooms, and visits to patient rooms on the floor. Although our experience was often varied depending on the physician that we were working with, for the most part my experience was entirely positive, and I treasure the ability to learn from so many different specialists.



These last two weeks were also full of explorations of Santo Domingo and the surrounding areas. On our first free weekend, I visited a few different museums and spent time learning about the history of the Dominican Republic. Their history is rich and unique, and contains ample examples of revolutionary movements and thought. In addition, our group spent a lot of time in the Zona Colonial, seeing the historic buildings and popping into the many different shops

on the Calle El Conde. On our final weekend there, we did an excursion to the Dunas de Las Calderas and Punta Salinas. I especially loved the tropical reefs there; the beautiful sights and colorful fish and coral are so special!

Our last meal of the trip before we flew out in the afternoon was at Adrien Tropical, a definite fan favorite place among our group. Although it could be difficult sometimes to find the food that I could eat with my dietary restrictions, I still believe strongly that the food I did have was a definite highlight! I will miss the varieties of fresh juices, coffee, mangú, and mangoes! Beyond that, however, I will definitely miss the students the most. They truly made this experience, and the friendships there are invaluable. This month has been faster than I could keep track of, and I was missing it before we even stepped onto the plane!

