

Medical Student Enrichment Program

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine

Clinical Elective: Lima, Peru - Cayetano Heredia University

Dates of Training: January 27, 2018 to February 26, 2018

Student: Andrew Prince, MS4

Date of Reflection: April 17, 2018

The baby blue hospital, Hospital Regabaliatti, towers fourteen stories over the local neighborhood. It is bordered by endless rows of honking taxis, trucks, motorbikes, and cars. Outside is a large manicured field with flowers all around. The distinct “H” of a helipad in the middle is marked with tropical plants instead of paint. A resident tells me it was used for the first time in years several weeks ago for a practice drill prior to the arrival of the Pope Francis in January. Inside, it is not much quieter. The ground floor, similar to a busy airport terminal, has a constant hum of patients and families moving between the various clinics off the principal corridor. All at first glance is much alike to many busy American hospitals. People are everywhere and the elevators are always packed... to the brim... It is here where the differences begin. Security has a strong presence throughout the hospital, constantly monitoring everyone’s movement and ensuring only authorized entrance. In fact patients form an organized line outside and are allowed entrance only with an MD-signed permit, valid for a specific time and location.

My morning destination is the 10-floor, home to the otolaryngology, ophthalmology, and head & neck services with a capacity for ~55 patients. Rooms are majority doubles with a few singles and one 10-bed room for pre-surgical admissions. Another interesting difference, patients from outside the *distrito* whom had to travel far were admitted as many as two days ahead to ensure operative day attendance.



Daily activities included pre-rounding followed by an hour long, resident run teaching rounds facilitated by several of the otolaryngology faculty members. During the month I was tasked to present two topics: analysis of auditory evoked potentials (AEPs) and neuro A&P related to AEPs. After, the team headed to the OR (M/W/F) or clinic (T/R). Residents were divided amongst the 6 clinic rooms that formed a wall between the patient area and back, personnel hallway. Two rooms were reserved for hearing exams (AEPs, audiometry, microscope) and one for flexible laryngoscopy. Patient demographics were fascinating with populations reflective of Peru’s three unique regions: the coast, the mountains, and the jungle. Each offered a fascinating glimpse into a distinct culture and category of differential diagnoses.

For example, natural/homeopathic treatments are common. One patient presented with OME with otorrhea notable for speckled, black deposits in the suppurative exudate representative of ash after using a “cucurucho”. (Worth an Internet search, the practice of *cucurucho* uses fire to create negative pressure to relieve otalgia, however this is a large risk of severe, traumatic facial burns). Another patient from the Amazon required surgical intervention secondary to fungal sinusitis from a rare, indigenous species.

Outside the hospital, this incredible journey continued. Peruvian cuisine is internationally recognized and was truly a treat to enjoy. Foods were often fusion styled with Peruvian-Chinese aka *Chifa* being the most popular. Ingredients were rich and diverse, including many unique Amazonian fruits served for desert. Distinctive plates include anticucho (cow heart kebab), alpaca meat (similar to a lama), and leche de tigre (a local type of ceviche). One weekend was reserved for exploring Cusco with a day hiking around Machu Picchu. It really is as magical as everyone says.

In all, this was an amazing experience and addition to my medical education. I enjoyed experiencing the culture first hand and all the laughs that ensued from the dialectal/linguistic differences from my primarily Iberian Spanish. Additionally it was a medical educationally rewarding experience seeing a new spectrum of pathologies. Lastly, I build relationships with Peruvian colleagues that will last throughout my career all while enjoying the many adventures Peru had to offer.

Andrew Prince