FSUCares Outreach:
Preparing a Culturally Appropriate Workforce through Service Learning

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Background

The presence of Florida State University in Panama is well-established through the existing FSU Panama campus located near Panama City in the “City of Knowledge.” The school’s relationship with Filipina was born out of undergrad-uate service outreach through which the village’s school was built. Shortly thereafter, the College of Medicine and FSU-Cares established a presence in Filipina through annual international medical outreach during Spring Break. The bond between FSUCares and Filipina continues to flourish today, facilitated by the friendships that have formed among our attending physicians and the people of the village. This allows for a remarkable continuity of care, while not sacrificing the ability to adapt and meet the needs of Filipina and the nearby communities.

FSUCares & Panama in 2012

FSUCares Outreach:
FSUCares, the mission of FSUCares is to prepare a culturally appropriate workforce, which is achieved through service learning.

Clinical Immersion: Our clinical immersion experience involved traveling to a nearby village and setting up clinic in a central, accessible space (e.g. school, church). We gained practical knowledge for the drugs at our disposal, and we were introduced to procedures such as vaccinations and Pap smears. During our patient interactions, we conducted a history and focused physical exam, then presented to our attending physicians. Following oral presentation, our attendings guided us in counseling our patients and suggesting an adequate treatment plan.

Clinical Immersion Day 1: Bajo Del Rio
Clinical Immersion Day 2: Lagunita
Clinical Immersion Day 3: Mangralito
Clinical Immersion Day 4: Filipina

Tour of the Social Security Hospital: Panama City

We were led by a neurologist through the hospital, meeting with physicians in the Department of Geriatrics, the Neurosurgery Unit, and the Critical Care Unit. During the tour we saw firsthand the extent to which shortage of beds and physicians pervade the Social Security healthcare system.

How has this trip impacted our views about our future practice?

• Our patient-centered skills are valuable in providing care to patients despite a significant language barrier.

• Chronic disease pervades throughout the world. Especially in the face of limited resources, a thorough history, physical exam, and counseling are critical tools for managing chronic disease in a variety of care settings.

• Exposure to such a wide variety of patient demographics and health conditions has broadened our interests in future specialty pursuits.

Recommendation for delivery of services to immigrants from Latin America in Florida

• Recognize the importance and involvement of family in the healthcare of Hispanic patients. In contrast to the somewhat individualistic perspective of patients in the United States, it was our impression in Panama that the family unit is heavily involved and informed in the care of each individual.

• Be aware of your body language and speech modulation during patient encounters.

• A culturally sensitive understanding for the biopsychosocial background of patients is crucial in forming the appropriate treatment plan that meets the patient’s unique needs.

Personal Reflections

Juliana Matthews M1

“Panama was phenomenal! Each day I spent there was a reminder of why I pursued the medical profession, and why I came to FSU College of Medicine. It was a privilege to work alongside a family of classmates, faculty, and the people of Filipina. Our trip was more than a medical experience, especially because of the relationship FSUCares has made with the people of Filipina.”

Jonathan Salud M1

“My experience in Panama was rewarding. I came away not only with a platform of chronic and infectious disease, but as well as a deeper appreciation for the value of patient-carefulness, especially in overcoming barriers such as language or cultural difference. I am so grateful to be a part of the long standing mutual admiration society that exists between FSUCares and the community of Filipina.”

Geami Britt M1

“My time in Panama was life-changing in so many ways. I started out on the trip with feeling of naivety and not knowing what to expect. I left Panama with a sense of peace and a new interest in cross-cultural medicine. I gained an immense amount of medical ‘power’.From the amazing physicians on the trip, I am amazed at how vast my medical knowledge became in just four short weeks. I am grateful for the experience, and I look forward to returning next year.”

Tiana Monostory M1

“Panama was the best thing about Panama. My trip was nothing but the relationship between FSUCares and Filipina. I was never in a situation where I felt like I couldn’t make it work. Each day was a reminder of what the relationship means to the people of Filipina. I am so proud to have been a part of the mission.”

Kristen Valencia M1

“The most meaningful part of my trip to Panama was the friendships that were made with the people of Panama and my classmates. It was an experience to remember. I never expected to have a week in which I learned more about my future career in medicine. However, I can’t express the love that I have for the people of Panama and their culture. I gained a new appreciation of the Panama’s culture and their ability to love their people. I learned so much more about myself and the people of Panama.”

John Thomas M2

“I am very grateful for the cultural and professional experiences I had during my second FSUCares trip to Panama. Interacting with the people of Filipina reminds me that my career as a physician is not just a profession, but a passion. I will forever be a part of the FSUCares family and will carry these experiences forward.”

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Our extended family in Filipina, Panama

“Una amistad, una vision, una realidad.”

“One friendship, one vision, one reality”