

Emily Donelan

IHCAI Costa Rica Program

I spent 4 weeks in Costa Rica participating in a medical Spanish program. The program was run by IHCAI and was called the Latin Spanish Patient in the Environment of Tropical Medicine. The program was mostly classroom based, with small groups and interactive learning with tutors. We were able to interact with two standardized patients to practice the medical Spanish we had learned during our classes. Class ran from 9 am to 4 pm and consisted of grammar in the morning and medical vocabulary and phrases in the afternoon. We also had 2 seminars on tropical medicine throughout the four weeks to introduce us to some of the diseases that Central America faces that are different from North America. We learned about the health care system in Costa Rica, how it differs from the U.S., its strengths and its weaknesses. We also took a trip to Tortugero, a rainforest on the eastern coast of Costa Rica. It is extremely beautiful with an enormous amount of wildlife to behold. During my trip I stayed with a family who lives in San Jose, which is where the program is located. We were provided with meals and a room. On the weekends I traveled with other members of the program to Manuel Antonio, Montezuma, and Monteverde. This program definitely improved my Spanish, especially my medical Spanish. I did not speak a word of Spanish before I left and now I feel much more comfortable speaking and understanding Spanish speakers. This will especially benefit me during my time at the promise clinic, since many of the patients we see only speak Spanish. I did not get to participate in any clinical experiences, except a

short tour of the hospital in San Jose, but this was expected because the program was purely an immersion experience.