

Child Family Health International (www.cfhi.org)
Reproductive Health in Quito, Ecuador

I spent four weeks in Quito, the capital of Ecuador participating in a Reproductive Health Program as well as taking formal classes in medical Spanish. A typical day consisted of clinical rotations during the morning. The sites included hospitals, labor and delivery room, community clinic and house visits with a mid-wife. The afternoon consisted of medical Spanish classes in a small group classroom setting. I lived with a host family while there and breakfast and dinner from the family was included in the cost of the program. The weekends were free to participate in more clinical rotations or to see other parts of the country.

I rotated through four different healthcare sites in Quito, Ecuador with each site having a primary focus on reproductive health. The objective of the project was to observe how reproductive healthcare functions in a socially conservative country. It was a primary goal of mine to see the impact a society with limited discussion on sexual health issues had on these young women, especially in the areas of seeking treatment and obtaining more information. I was able to interact with these patients firsthand in the medical setting to gain more insight about their lives, reproductive health dilemmas they were experiencing, how they were handling these issues and find out the extent of knowledge they already had about the topic of sexual health. I found that a large number of the young women in Quito became pregnant at about the age of fourteen. While many of them were using oral contraceptives, compliance was a huge issue due to their lifestyles and financial situations. Unfortunately, this lack of compliance was a common trend in the patients I worked with as well as a large majority of the other patients, and frequently resulted in multiple teenage pregnancies for these young women.

During my free time and on the weekends, I took advantage of the opportunity to see the country, different historical sites, museums, and beaches. Ecuador has so many different dynamics to the country. It is located on the Pacific coast, contains parts of the Amazon, and the capital sits at about 3000 meters above sea level! While I didn't get to see them all, it was definitely a memorable experience both culturally and clinically. To find out more information about the program, you can contact me at eckertts@umdnj.edu

