

Shadowing in Zaragoza, Spain

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Introduction: In June 2012, I spent three weeks shadowing physicians and learning about the Spanish healthcare system at two health centers in Zaragoza, Spain.

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| Spain: | Zaragoza: |
| ◆ Population: 47M | ◆ Population: 700k |
| ◆ Official Language: Spanish | ◆ Autonomous Community: Aragón |
| ◆ Capital: Madrid | |
| ◆ Currency: Euro | |
| ◆ GDP: \$1.4 Trillion | |
| ◆ Unemployment: 25% | |
| ◆ Income tax: 25%-52% | |



The Spanish National Health System

The Spanish healthcare system provides care for its entire population.

- Ranked 7th by WHO
- Publicly funded; doctors are plentiful, but salaried employees for government, making around \$100,000.
- Total health spending is 8.5% GDP (compared to 16% in USA)
- Health spending per capita is \$2,671 compared to \$7,290 in USA.
- Life expectancy is 81.1 years, compared to 78 years in USA.
- Regions provide healthcare to residents, funded by federal government income tax and value-added tax up to %21.
- People required to choose doctor/hospital *in the region in which they live*.
- No options to switch to more affluent region of care.

The Program:

I was able to work at two health centers during my stay. I shadowed a pediatrician, internist, and social worker at the **Centro de Salud Arrabal**, which was an outpatient, primary care center. Afterwards, I was in the ER and cardiac unit at **The Hospital Royo Villanovo**, which is one of

At the **Centro de Salud Arrabal**, visits had

everything from a cold to emergency ear irrigation. The social work was especially interesting. Unemployment, disability, and immigration were common themes that really affected the patients in such a tough economy right now.



The **Hospital Royo Villanovo** doctors allowed me to be very hands-on. I practiced auscultation, palpation, and much more of the physical exam. The best part was practicing history taking in Spanish. Reconvening with the doctors after each patient was great to hear and utilize medical terminology in Spanish. I was seeing many things for the first time—in another language!

Why Spain?

Spain will always have a place in my heart. Before medical school, I worked in Madrid for two years teaching science at an elementary school. I love the culture, language, people and beautiful landscapes of Spain. I saw this program as a perfect opportunity to learn about a successful healthcare system.



Summary:

This program was my first foray into the hospital setting, and I feel privileged that I could do it in a foreign language with wonderful physicians. I learned clinical skills, medical knowledge and language during this great lesson in effective healthcare.

- UL: Windmills of Aragón**
- UR: Retiro Park (Madrid)**
- LL: St. Pablo Cathedral (ZGZ)**
- LR: Basilica Our Lady of the Pillar (ZGZ)**

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