

Christiaan R. de Vries – Medellin, Colombia

I was privileged to spend the month of June 2008 in Medellín, Colombia participating in a language and medical immersion program at La Universidad CES. CES is a prestigious university specializing in the health sciences. The program that we participated in was specifically designed for students from our school in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Office of Global Health. We participated in week-long rotations in Obstetrics/Gynecology, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, and Family Health at hospitals and clinics throughout the city. We also took classes in Emergency Services, Public Health, and Microbiology. We received 2 weeks of Medical Spanish, which was very helpful in communicating with patients and health professionals during our rotations. Families of students at CES graciously welcomed us into their homes for the month.

The rotations and classes were fascinating and unique in that we had the opportunity to work with attending physicians and medical students at various points in their careers. In the Obstetrics/Gynecology rotation, we were able to use CES's delivery simulator, and then participate in the real thing at Hospital General de Medellín. During Pediatrics, we worked at Clinica Santa Ana, a small clinic in downtown Medellín specializing in the treatment of malnourished children. Emergency Services, one of my favorite experiences, included a full-size ambulance simulator and lessons in repelling off of an overpass. On the whole, we were exposed to experiences that would probably not be possible in the United States.

Living in Medellín was an unforgettable experience. My host family was very supportive as my level of Spanish proficiency "evolved" during my stay. The students that we met were kind and went out of their way to make sure we enjoyed our stay. Medellín is a beautiful, vibrant city with much to offer in the form of entertainment, arts, and activities. During our last week, we were able to see famous attractions throughout the city and surrounding area. We were also allowed to plan our own mini-vacation to San Andres, a Colombian island in the Caribbean.

If you have the opportunity to do so, I strongly recommend traveling abroad during the summer after the first year of medical school – especially to Colombia!

