



## **Child Family Health International: Healthcare Challenges in South Africa**

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CFHI is a nonprofit organization committed to providing students a unique opportunity to experience culture and international healthcare. They are well committed to broadening the minds of aspiring health professionals with the hopes that students will not only gain appreciation for the many underprivileged communities of the world, but also harbor the motivation to make a difference. CFHI's primary mission is to work towards promoting health of the world community through a global health service-learning program. This educational program allows students to experience the economic, political, and social factors that influence health in disadvantaged communities around the world. Healthcare Challenges in South Africa offers students an exclusive opportunity to gain insight into the healthcare system and learn how professionals have dealt with the public health crisis that has fundamentally altered South Africa's social and economic structuring. The program is tailored for students from all levels of training. College pre-medical students rotate in community clinics, nursing students rotate in suburban maternity hospitals, and medical students rotate in secondary and tertiary care facilities.

For five weeks, I shadowed physicians in the Infectious Disease Clinic at G.F. Jooste Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. This clinic provides education, testing, treatment, and medications for HIV positive patients. Although the patients have primary care physicians located in their townships, they come to the clinic for the majority of their medical services. The vigorous treatment regimens used to treat HIV and Tuberculosis have many adverse effects and some patients do not take their medication regularly, if at all. To assess and monitor patient compliance, the Infectious Disease Clinic has not only instituted a bi-monthly pill counting regimen, but they also require a counselor to oversee the patient's treatment. This has shown to increase adherence to medication and improve recovery.

I lived with a South African host family during my stay in Cape Town. I was welcomed with opened arms and treated as a member of the family. This aspect of the program allows students to gain valuable insight into South African culture. In our free time, we were able to go sightseeing and visit beautiful South African landmarks, such as Camp's Bay and Table Mountain. We visited a national game reserve for a safari drive and even toured South Africa's infamous wine country.

**Botlierskop Safari**



**Camp's Bay**



**Fabulous Restaurants**



**Table Mountain**



This wonderful opportunity has broadened my public health knowledge and allowed me to experience a different culture and develop creativity in problem-solving. I learned how the challenges of working in a clinical environment with limited diagnostic and therapeutic resources can impact the community and how physicians cope with these disadvantages. I have certainly grown personally and professionally and now have a deepened understanding of myself and international medicine. I will continue to play an active role in the global health community and hope to work closely with underprivileged nations in the field of infectious diseases in my future career.

**Langa Township**

