

Krysta Contino

Clinical Experience and Immersion: Zaragoza, Spain: Summer 2010

My trip to Zaragoza, Spain this summer was one full of clinical experiences as well as cultural and language immersion. I spent the majority of my time working with Dr. Fernando Orozco, a Family Medicine physician, at the Centro de Salud in Valdefierro, a clinic that provided care to this largely underserved neighborhood of Zaragoza. Each morning, I saw patients with Dr. Orozco in the office. The appointments were unlike that which we are used to in primary care in the United States; they were just 7 minutes long. In this brief period, Dr. Orozco had to obtain a history, perform a physical exam, determine what was wrong, and then decide the treatment that he was going to prescribe. During the lunch hour, which was really just a snack period for the Spanish natives, we went into the community to make house calls, something that is currently almost non-existent in our country. I worked with a resident, Alberto, during the afternoon hours. He was an excellent teacher, and because his appointments were a bit longer (15 minutes), he was able to explain things more thoroughly to me. I learned a great deal about their medical education system, the ways in which healthcare is distributed throughout the country, and even became familiar with their EMR system. In addition to the daily exposure to usual office practices, I was able to observe and assist some minor in-office surgical procedures and participate in smoking cessation counseling. I also had the opportunity to shadow physicians in the ER at the University Hospital.

Although my experience was very much clinical, I also had the chance to explore the city in the evenings and a few other cities, including Barcelona, Madrid, and Pamplona, on the weekends. I think my favorite part about being in Zaragoza was that it really is not a tourist location, so I was forced to use my Spanish and really immerse myself in a different language and culture. One of the residents took us around to show us cultural landmarks in the city, to the Festival of San Juan, and to try the many types of food that the country has to offer. I truly enjoyed my time in Zaragoza and hope that I can return during my fourth year.

