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I traveled to Cape Town, South Africa in June 2009 to participate in a four-week clinical experience program run by Child Family Health International (CFHI). I spent two weeks rotating through the Trauma Unit, the equivalent of our Emergency Medicine Department, and 2 weeks rotating through the Surgery Department at G.F. Jooste Hospital in the Western Cape Province of Cape Town. The facility is a government run, centrally located teaching hospital that serves a large and varied patient population. In addition to rounding with physicians and taking histories from patients, I attended weekly Radiology Review sessions where doctors presented on the most interesting and unusual cases they encountered that week. We worked Monday through Friday from 8 am – 4 pm. I opted to do an overnight shift on one of the weekends as well. The evenings and weekends were for our group to explore and see the beauty of Cape Town. The city itself is a dynamic and diverse place. It truly reflects the history of apartheid, with a large demographic of individuals of African, European, and Asian descent. I visited many of the famous sites in Cape Town including Robbens' Island, Cape of Good Hope and Table Mountain. Our group also took a trip to the wine farms of Stellenbosch and the Southern Cape.



I experienced many “firsts” on this trip: I scrubbed in on an explorative laparotomy for a patient with a gunshot wound, saw an X-Ray showing the characteristic punched out lesions of a patient with Multiple Myeloma, looked at the optic disc of a patient with CMV retinopathy, interviewed a patient with Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome who had asterixis, and saw the classic presentation of Courvoisier’s sign where a patient with pancreatic cancer has a palpable gall bladder. Outside of the hospital, I went bungee jumping, went on a safari, and learned a bit of Afrikaans, the official language of Cape Town. It goes without saying that this experience was a rare and invaluable part of my career and it is one that I will never forget. I would love to travel more and continue to work abroad, because I know there is so much I gain personally and professionally from working in social-cultural settings outside my own.