

Summary

I spent a month living with a family in the town of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu valley. On weekdays, I walked twenty minutes to the Dr. Iwamura Hospital, where I worked with several different specialists. They taught about me about medicine and surgery in Nepal. Additionally, I taught a few English classes a week, since the mother of the family I was staying with, was the founder and principle of the school on top of which we lived, the Sunshine School. On weekends, I explored the country on my own.

Conclusions

Taking part in Projects Abroad's Medical Project in Nepal was one of the most eye opening and amazing experiences I have had in my life so far. Staying with a family in a small town allowed me to experience Nepal in a more genuine setting and not solely as a tourist. Working side by side with local doctors and teachers really allowed me to see and learn more than I ever could have by any other approach. I met amazing people and gained a world perspective. This experience has allowed me to become a more well rounded future physician.

Stories:

Healthcare: Triumphs and Obstacles

When I was shadowing the medical director, Dr. Jaiswal, a cardiologist who also did primary care, I remember an older lady came in with her family. They kept thanking Dr. Jaiswal. A few years ago, he had diagnosed her with hyperthyroidism and got her the treatment she needed just when her family was giving up hope and thought she was going to die. He told me those are the moments when he feels most rewarded.

In another instance, while I was watching Dr. Jaiswal do an echocardiogram, he told me that the patient, an older man, needed a valve replacement but probably would not receive one. He explained that the government hospitals only performed 200 of those surgeries a year and there were thousands of patients in need. The patient was a poor farmer and so couldn't afford to go to the expensive private hospitals and pay for valve replacement out of pocket. I was told he would die.

Healthcare: An Inside Perspective

The day before I was scheduled to return home, I woke up with a fever and painful chest cough. The symptoms were in no way debilitating, but I was concerned about infecting other passengers and perhaps having my symptoms worsen during my 24 hours in transit. To make a long story short, I wound up on the receiving end of the Nepali healthcare system in the emergency room of one of the hospitals. Like any American, I was concerned about whether they would take my traveler's insurance. They didn't. I had to pay for the visit to the emergency room, including a chest x-ray, out of pocket. My bill totaled the equivalent of three US dollars.

A Republic is Born

The morning after I arrived in Kathmandu, the Projects Abroad staff gave me my orientation, and the next day, they were going to take me to my assignment in Bhaktapur, a town about thirty minutes away. This was delayed for two days, due to a petrol shortage first and then due to a transportation strike that the Nepali people had called for after the lack of a response to the brutal murder of a business man by members of the Maoist party. As no cars were allowed on the roads that day, I explored the city and temples by foot. I was passed by hordes of chanting protesters. I

also passed tires that had been set afire and shattered glass where protesters had thrown bricks at cars that had dared the streets. This may have seemed tumultuous, but I found that I was fascinated in the unity and power of the Nepali people. The people's demand for action had essentially shut down the city. I soon found out that I had come to Nepal at a very historically significant moment in time. Nepal was about to abolish the monarchy. Within a week of my delayed arrival in Bhaktapur, Nepal was declared a Republic.

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I pose with some holy men at a Hindu Temple



At Bhaktapur's town center is Durbar square, a beautiful historic wonder of religious temples and architectural delights.



This colorful Buddhist stupa was dressed in Tibetan prayer flags and marigolds for a holy day. It is located at a joint Hindu and Buddhist holy place atop a hill overlooking Kathmandu, nicknamed the Monkey Temple, for its plentiful simian inhabitants.



The orthopedist, Dr. Koirala, conducts a check up with a patient who had been in motorcycle accident six months earlier.



Third and fourth grade students from the Sunshine School enjoy a brief break between speakers for Environment Day.