

Andrew Wang
Himalayan Health Exchange
July 16-August 2, 2005
Chang Thang Plateau/Ladakh Tibetan Borderland Expedition
Medical-dental expedition to the shores of Tso Morari Lake (15,000 feet) on the Chang Thang Plateau.

This summer I went on a trip organized by the Himalayan Health Exchange—a group that arranges trips to remote regions of the Himalayas to provide medical care to the indigenous populations. I went on the trip that focused on the Chang Thang Plateau/Ladakh region of Northern India. We flew into New Delhi and used a combination of rail and road to reach Manali (6000 ft), the starting point of our medical adventure. The expedition took us from the plains of Delhi to the outer Himalayas and finally over the highest drive-able road in the world as we crossed over the Greater Himalayan Range and entered the Trans Himalayan regions along the Indo-Tibetan Borderlands.

Medical and dental camps were held at the local village/settlement clinics. Our clinic sites included Monasteries, health centers and village community centers. Due to the limited access to x-ray and lab facilities our patients were referred to Manalai and Leh hospitals for tests or medications as found necessary. In the 8-day work period, our team provided medical and dental care including diagnostic procedures and advice on issues relating to public health and hygiene to approximately 1500 patients. I was supervised by an attending physician or a resident and, with the aid of an interpreter, interviewed, examined, diagnosed, and treated patients as an independent health care provider. Personally, I was able to diagnose and treat patients with: syphilis, hives, tuberculosis, ring-worm, rheumatic heart disease, and congenital rubella—all diseases that are rare in the western cultures. The clinical exposure was invaluable in giving me experience in examining patients before second year and has allowed me to place much of what I am learning this year in my classes in a real life clinical context.

The trip was a very demanding high altitude expedition with minimal comfort. Clinic and camp sites were located in remote and rough mountainous terrain. Despite slow elevation changes, almost everyone was afflicted with some sort of altitude change related illness. In the face of these adversities, however, I am sure that every participant went home with a positive experience, as we were able to provide a great service to an underserved population, practice our medical skills, and explore an exciting culture.

Expedition Cost: \$ 2420 Plus airfare.
Breakdown of airfare.
\$1418.00 International return-ticket airfare off the east or west coast:
\$110.00 Domestic airfare Leh-New Delhi:
Total U.S. \$3,948.00

Information:
<http://www.himalayanhealth.com/>



