

Bangkok & Mae Sot, Thailand



Larissa Gonzalez

Program: Thailand International Elective: Health Sciences, Summer 2018

Major: Medicine (Physician Assistant Studies MPS)

Earning the Community Engagement Badge:



One of the events that most left an impression on my mind, was accompanying the home visit team to see patients in the community. Although I have done home visits on critically-ill patients of all income levels before, in my previous employment in the US, what we witnessed in Thailand still impacted me. In Thailand, we visited an older gentleman who had suffered a stroke and a woman who had suffered an MVA, who both had the love of their families to care for them.

Sadly, this wasn't the case for a woman living under a bridge. Her circumstances made me contemplate the human condition in ways I had never done before. While I tried to focus on the good aspects of her situation – that medical staff were coming to check on her and treating her, it was hard not to ponder the more difficult questions. The only comfort was knowing that at least the Sirindhorn Hospital staff were aware of her condition and making efforts to provide some measure of care for her. In a country so proud of its universal healthcare system, I would hope that people like her should not have to fall through the cracks.

Earning the Career Development Badge:



We visited Sirindhorn Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand where we learned about distinct healthcare systems, healthcare roles and visited different departments within the hospital including (but not limited to): women's health, labor & delivery, surgery, emergency medicine, adult medicine, TB ward, children's ward. We participated in the various services provided by the Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital including traditional acupuncture, cupping, Chinese massage and learned about TCM philosophy. We also worked in rural Thailand Mae Sot clinic which primarily services Burmese refugees with limited resources; we did clinic work in labor & delivery, adult medicine, pediatrics, wound clinic, surgery and inpatient care

All of these were valuable experiences to me. I think learning about TCM has made me aware about alternative medical options that patients may be considering or would like to consider. Working in a different country's healthcare system has taught me about the different roles of healthcare workers and health management.



“ I felt personally touched that one lady took a particular interest in teaching me Thai dance properly, sort of as her "apprentice." I truly enjoyed every minute of it and I think that the intermingling of my generation and her generation filled both of our hearts with happiness. ”

Transferable Skills:



Working at the Mae Sot Clinic reaffirmed my desire to work with underserved populations and refugees whenever possible. I would love to reach out to Burmese refugees in our country either through my future employment in CHC or as a volunteer helping them to navigate life in the US. Even though there was language barrier, I learned that you can communicate concern, care, and warmth via other means to help patients feel validated and heard; and I think it is important that I remember this no matter what clinic setting I end up working in. This opportunity also helped me understand what it means to work effectively as part of a team and to be able to work independently in medical decision-making.