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I still remember all of the excitement and fear that I felt as I was traveling to Ghana. As I was about to land at the airport, I could not help but think of the fact that I did not know a single soul in all of Ghana. I did not even know the person who was supposed to pick me up from the airport. It was all new, all completely fresh, exciting and terrifying. I remember meeting my country coordinator, Yaw, and my new site partner, Tyler, who would be staying with me for the first three weeks of the trip. United Planet organized our stay in a hotel in Accra for the first two nights as we oriented ourselves to the new place.

Yaw took us to our placement in Ho, the Volta Regional Hospital, where I would be working for the next nine weeks. In a sense, my internship was more with this hospital than it was with United Planet. Yaw went back to his home in Accra, and Tyler and I were left to answer only to the hospital staff. He checked in by phone occasionally, but really we were on our own living there. We stayed with a host family, and they treated us as being very independent as well. They seemed to want limited interaction with us, which I was disappointed by at first, but then learned to accept over time. Because of this, I did not feel like a tourist, or someone that was just there with a volunteer organization. I felt like a resident of Ho, someone who lived there, was working there, and belonged. I was completely immersed.

The work at the hospital was an incredible learning experience that I could not have gotten anywhere else. I had the flexibility to choose my own schedule and observe the things that I wanted to observe. I chose to spend two weeks in the male medical ward, two

weeks in the operating theater, two weeks in accident and emergency, two weeks in the psychiatric ward, and one week in the various diagnostic labs they have there. The hospital also has departments in pediatrics, ophthalmology, radiology, maternal care, and surgical wards where I did not get the chance to work.

My role depended a lot on which department I was working in. In the medical ward, I went on rounds with the doctors, changed bed sheets, helped move and position patients, took patients to the radiology department for x-rays and ultrasounds, fed patients, and took vital signs. Most of my effort was spent trying to learn about each of the patients there and their medical conditions. Most of the downtime that I had there was spent talking to the nurses and nursing students about Ghanaian and American culture. In the surgical theater, I mostly just watched and learned about interesting surgeries. I observed everything from a thyroidectomy, to a femur repair surgery, to a mastectomy, to several C-sections.

Accident and emergency was unbelievable. They had a lot of cases come in and out each day, and again, my role was mostly to watch and learn. I was, however, able to help with a burn wound debridement and dressing, as well as keeping patients calm and fetching items for the doctors there, like drip stands and cannulas. Things there were quite intense, and there were even a few patients that died while I was working there. The psychiatric ward was interesting, but very relaxed. They only had two inpatients, and we mostly just took vital signs for the outpatients that came to collect their medications. Finally, the labs were incredibly interesting. I worked in the microbiology, hematology, parasitology, and blood bank labs, and learned a lot about how each of the different tests are run, along with being able to run some of the tests myself.

Overall, it was an unparalleled medical shadowing experience, where I got to see a different side of medicine. The hospital was definitely resource constrained, and I learned how they were able to do the best with what they had. I learned about healthcare issues in Ghana, and about all of the things that make it different from American medicine.

But my experience went far beyond the work environment. I spent my weekends going on excursions to broaden my view of Ghana. United Planet only organized one trip to the Wli waterfall. The rest were on my own initiative and the initiative of my various site partners (each of the United Planet partners that I had living with me would only stay for two or three weeks, so I had four of them total). We climbed three different mountains and visited a mountaintop village, we went to a beach near the border of Togo, went to a monkey sanctuary, and travelled to Cape Coast for a weekend, among other things. Each of these trips forced me to improve my travel skills, and to become more confident in unfamiliar situations. I feel that after this internship, I am a much more experienced traveller, and I have proven that I can take care of things, even in unfamiliar situations.

For my nine weeks in Ghana, I ate their food, took their public transportation, went to their churches, went to their parties, used their market, all as a Ghanaian would. I learned their special greetings and local customs, their history and politics, and even spoke a little Ewe. I will not ever pretend to be Ghanaian, but my time there has made Ghana feel like a home to me. I achieved my goals of learning more about medicine and becoming a more competent traveller, all while coming to appreciate and adapt to a new culture.