

Set 6:

1. Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how have your impressions of the host culture changed?

My idea of poverty in the Philippines definitely changed during the 10 weeks I've been here. Originally, I had an impression that I see slums and squatters everywhere, and that quality of life for people living in poverty would be poor. I was prepared for poverty as the pre-departure orientation made it clear to me that going into a third world country was going to be a bit of a culture shock. Don't get me wrong, poverty is a huge problem where I spent the past few months, but as I began to integrate into the barangays, and I got a first hand look into the small nipa huts of community members I realized that even though these people don't have a lot of money, I wasn't touring and living in slums. The community organization, services, and mentality was honestly unbelievable. In every little barangay there was a government set up with a barangay captain, barangay officials, and barangay health workers that all served to make their communities healthier, more prosperous, and happier. In the town proper the Rural Health Units provided free, amazing healthcare to everyone. The infrastructure that the rural islands in the Philippines have built is unparalleled - from what I've gathered, I think you would be hard pressed to find another developing country with community programs like the ones here.

2. What were your greatest challenges and rewards on this internship in each of your three development areas?

Personal: It was incredibly rewarding to witness a birth. I will never forget that day, and the profound feeling of happiness I had watching the midwife and nurse bring another person into the room. It made me realize that whatever I end up doing in the medical field, it will be with child and maternal health and that I am 100% having children when I'm older.

Sometimes along the duration of my trip I felt very on edge because of my reactions to things due to other interns I was with, which was very challenging for me. The instance that stands out to me is in regards to witnessing childbirth (I guess birth was a double edged sword for me here). Later that night after watching the birth, some of the other female interns and I were talking about our reactions to what we had witnessed. I wasn't alone in my feelings of profound joy, but we were a house divided (2 vs. 2) to say the least. The difference in viewpoints wasn't a challenge for me, it was the fact that I was being judged for wanting to have children, and the idea that I would be willing to put a career on hold to raise children. I am feminist, and so was every woman I was there with. The very essence of being a feminist is equality, choice, and supporting other women, and to be judged for my ambition to raise children (one of the most important jobs anyone, male or female, could have) was crushing. I felt like I was thinking something wrong, or that I wasn't as academic or "smart" as they were, and it felt hypocritical. It's a choice to have children where we live, and by making that choice as a woman because I want to is a right that I shouldn't have to be judged for just because others might not want to make the same choice.

-Professional: Hearing from students that the local MHO's and RHU staff in locations that I had previously visited talked to them about me highly was very rewarding. It made me

realize that I really had made a good impression, and a lasting impression on the people there. I hope to continue to keep in touch so that those relationships never fizzle out.

A professional challenge I had, and mentioned in an earlier question set, was declining to help in medical procedures that I was not trained to do. Doctors, and clinic staff that aren't directly in contact with CFHI don't fully understand the intern's education levels and consequently getting asked to do things that were out of our training happened a lot. Saying no wasn't the issue, that was very easy. It was the fact that saying no in Filipino culture, especially to elders, is something that you just don't do. It can come off as very rude, and that you don't appreciate them or what they're offering you. I felt like I was constantly apologizing, and trying to make up for any cultural taboos I was committing, even though I knew I was doing the right thing - which was very tiring.

-Cross-Cultural: My professional reward definitely crosses over into the cross-cultural rewards of my internship as well. I've absolutely loved being able to connect with clinic staff and community members on levels way beyond coworkers and acquaintances. I feel like I have made lifelong friendships in a foreign country despite a language barrier. I know that it's not a matter of if I'm ever going to come back to the Philippines, it's a matter of when.

The language barrier was a cross-cultural challenge for sure, but it's not the one that sticks out in my mind. I feel like every intern here was able to communicate effectively with people because of most local's basic knowledge of English. Walking onto a rural island as a tall, blonde, white, single, young woman and into a community with a few thousand people meant a lot of stares and cat calls: this was probably the biggest cross-cultural challenge for me. Basically every time I stepped out onto the street, men would yell at me. Things like, "Are you single?", "Where you going?" and many others were heard on a daily basis. I never felt threatened or unsafe, but I know other interns did. I feel like being surrounded by it for months just ended up desensitizing me, but I think how I handled the unwanted attention was savvy. I can't stress the importance of longer, loose conservative shirts, as well as pants. Not just for the heat, but for modesty. I'm all for women's rights and the western idea that women should be able to wear whatever we want because our bodies are not sacred or distracting, more than 50% of the world's population are women...yada yada yada but not in a culture where you're a guest. It was not my place to try and teach these men a lesson in millennial women's rights, and even if I had it wouldn't have made a big enough impact to change their habits. Modest clothing, and not feeding into the comments eventually allowed them to roll off my chest.

I just want to end with each challenge was rewarding because I learned something about myself through each one. I had the mindset coming into this internship that there were going to be struggles and hard days, but if I was able to take a step back and process them I'd be able to see that they played an important role in an overall rewarding and amazing experience. It would be foolish to accept the good in anything and not the bad, because choosing not to deal with the bad only leads to worse.

Set 5:

1. Identify 3-4 accomplishments or successes in your internship of which you are most proud. These can be professional, personal or cross-cultural. Explain them briefly below.

- Community integration - making lasting relationship with people in the communities I've entered
- Trying foods - making sure that I try everything placed in front of me, and not just as a sign of respect, but to make sure I'm not missing out on something amazing
- Witnessing three births, and surgeries - realizing what I might want to do later on in life

2. After identifying 3-4, pick two of these and expand on them with the following:

I'll start with the birth. Watching three women deliver their child was life changing. I always knew that I wanted kids, but I never knew how strong my desire to raise children was until after that experience. When we were in Calatrava, there was a birth happening at the RHU that I literally ran to in order to watch it, but we were too late (hung up by a sexist ex-major who was bragging about himself for two hours to us, and showing us his extravagant home). To say I was frustrated that night was an understatement, so when we got to QQ and had the opportunity to watch, I couldn't wait.

It was really difficult to watch the moms go through so much pain during the process, especially because there was nothing that I could do to help them. Of course I couldn't offer any assistance because I'm an undergrad, but the midwives and nurses couldn't offer much help either. There were no pain meds available, and all that was said was words of encouragement. What I had to do was look past the obvious face of pain. I tried to think about why that excruciating pain was worth it. I thought about the joys of motherhood, and about how that pain that I was seeing could also be viewed as intense determination and pride. Changing the lense on the situation really helped me realize the beauty in childbirth and motherhood, and helped me realize that whatever I do later in life (career wise and other) children will be a part of it.

Wherever we went in the Philippines, we were presented with food. In small barangays that were some of the poorest communities I've ever seen, the community members would make us food because that was the only thing that they could offer us. Not only did I make it a point to eat the food presented to us every time, even if I had just eaten a meal, I purposefully ordered the "weird" foods on the menus at restaurants.

I think this holds true for every culture, but food is a huge part of Filipino culture. I wanted to experience as much of the culture as I could, and food was a great place to start. I'm not going to lie, eating sisig (pig face), intestines, blood pudding, and a bunch of other conventionally gross foods was challenging. I really had to remind myself that my goal was to experience life in the Philippines, and that meant eating the food. It's very mental, the idea of something being gross. Certain things are stigmatized making it really difficult to formulate your own opinion. I pushed myself to keep an open mind so that I could have a fully Filipino experience.

3. Describe the workplace culture at your host organization. How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?

I really like workplace culture in my host organization. Everything is so relaxed, and coworkers treat each other like family. They share meals together, and are constantly updated on each others lives. It's not frowned upon to bring your child into work, and if something in your family pops up, you are always allowed to leave and spend time with them. I knew going into the 10 weeks that family was incredibly important in the Philippines, but being in the workplace

showed me just how important it really is. Viewing work as a family is very foreign to me coming from the US. I haven't worked in an office setting before, but I know from talking with my Dad and Mom that things run a little differently here. I think that there's a mentality here that your work life and your personal life should be kept very separate, and that when you come to work, you shouldn't let outside commitments get in the way. Personally, I struggle with the workplace model and being in a workplace in the Philippines really vibed with me. I think that in order to work effectively, you have to balance all aspects of life. If you try and numb one aspect of life, in my opinion, you numb all others inadvertently. I believe it's so important to feel everything and process everything together in order to get the full picture, and healthcare workers in the Philippines did this very well.

4. What words of advice do you have for future interns as they prepare for this internship and living in your host country/culture?

I think if I thought about this for a while, I could come up with a huge list - but that list could probably be summed up with what I would hope would be an obvious piece of advice: be open, be willing, and do everything with a smile on your face/ a smile goes a long way. Interns will witness a lot of hardship during any duration of stay, and it's important to see and accept it so it's clear what needs to be done to help it. But if you can't bring yourself back to a positive mindset, brain power is lost - I think this is true for interns and health care professionals alike. Just smiling at a patient that's having a painful procedure will help to calm their emotions, and yours. I remember one of the first times we had an emergency case come into the RHU. It was a dislocated elbow, and the boy was clearly in excruciating pain. I happened to be texting my mom at the time, and briefly told her what was happening (she works in a healthcare setting with patients who experience pain all the time), and she said, "Just remember to watch your facial expressions, smile!" But something that I wasn't expecting to report back as advice for future interns is the need for everyone who comes on this trip is to have a solid moral compass and the importance of having a strong personal ethics. The amount of times I was asked to assist, and or complete a medical procedure was unreal - I honestly wasn't prepared for it. But I knew that no matter what I couldn't participate in the ways that people were hoping for me to. I tried saying things like no thank you, or maybe later... just to defer the offer, but people here are persistent, and I had to come up with other ways to say no. I finally came to the conclusion that the only way to make myself clear, was to say my program doesn't allow me to. I hope that future interns realize that they don't need to do things that violate medical ethics in order to be helpful in medical environments. Even the medical student that was with me wouldn't touch patients, give injections, or scrub in on the surgeries. Future interns need to know how to say no - without being offensive.

Set 4:

1. How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?

My knowledge of human anatomy from the 300 HPHY sequence, and public health initiatives from the Medical Humanities course I took have directly impacted me in the work environments of my internship. I wasn't expecting to feel as comfortable as I have in the Rural Health Units.

When patients come in, and the MHO's diagnose, I know the physiology of probably 75% of what they're dealing with. As an undergraduate student, I was expecting to know nothing. And in reality this is still true... when you consider the social determinates of health that are applicable to the residents in these rural Filipino communities, I'm still trying to get a handle on everything. I feel like you really have to be a part of the community (living there for a few years) to get a handle on that kind of stuff.

2. Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths? Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) to learn about the field?

An opportunity to observe a surgeon, and an anesthesiologist while in Romblon has made me more interested in pursuing surgery than I ever have been before. The chief of the hospital at Romblon Provincial Hospital, Dr. A, is good friends with Dr. Jobin (our local preceptor in Alcantara) and he invited us to observe a local medical mission that was coming in to do cleft lip/palate surgeries. The mission was supposed to last 4 days, and we were only able to come to the last 2, but the mission ended early. Dr. A was so accommodating and allowed us to watch normal elective surgeries that were happening in the hospital instead. We were able to watch 7 procedures over the course of two days: Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia, 2 Cholecystectomies, testicular removal, Ureteral shunt removal, Hernia repair, and kidney stone removal. The surgeon, Dr. Formalo, and the anesthesiologist, Dr. Benedicto, were amazing teachers. They kept everything very interactive, and light. I was nervous about being in the way, or possibly taking attention away from the patients on the table, but the group as a whole did great! This was one of the settings where my knowledge of human anatomy came into play. Dr. Formalo would walk us through each procedure he was about to do on his iPad. I was able to name structures and discuss surgical plans in anatomical terms. While he was in the bodies, he would ask things like, "What am I about to cut through?", and I was able to answer him correctly almost every single time. While in the operating room, I felt like I was holding informal interviews with both the doctors. We were able to talk about the job struggles that surgeons face here in rural Philippines due to lack of infrastructure (ultimately poverty), and how they came to do what they do. Dr. Fomalo and Dr. Benedicto felt like father figures by the end of the two days. I will never forget how they took such great pride in teaching us what they could, and sharing experiences that I could never gain stateside.

3. Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?

Preface: my role in this situation was as a bystander, but I've come to realize here more than ever, that being a bystander doesn't mean you don't have an important role.

It was after dinner one day in our first municipality, and we were casually talking with Dr. Jobin's brother and sister-in-law, as well as a few friends that we had made in the town - just enjoying each others company, and eating some yummy Filipino snacks. I'm not sure how one of the other students got onto this topic, but they started talking about romantic relationships. I knew from the get-go that relationships between people in the philippines are much different than in the US just from the hugely conservative catholic population. How you identify sexually, and how you pick your partners is extremely personal wherever you go in the world, but people in the Philippines are very private about that kind of stuff. Automatically I knew that this conversation was going to get weird (to say the least), and the student ended up making a

couple of people in our group (who were locals) very uncomfortable with their “unorthodox” personal choices. In the situation, I just froze, and the side conversation that was happening between another person and I just kinda stopped. I know this about myself, that in situations like that, I kinda just like to joke to try and make the mood lighter, but I think if it were to happen again I’d take more direct action. I think I would either try and redirect the conversation as a whole by asking a semi-related question that could lead the conversation in a different direction or maybe I’d even make some kind of diversion that would have allowed me to bring the person away from the group and mention to them what was happening. Nothing that happened that night was from a malicious place, and I think that was understood, but still - it was very awkward, and as a bystander I think I could have helped it not happen.

4. What is the most frustrating aspect of your host culture? What is the most rewarding aspect?

I’m not sure if this is an aspect of the host culture, or if it’s a byproduct of going abroad with a program like CFHI, but the most frustrating aspect of my trip so far is the constant supervision. Whatever we do, even if it’s just walking down the street to get ice cream after dinner from the local corner store, or taking a tricycle home from work, someone is always accompanying us. It’s not that the people who are accompanying us are annoying, in fact most of the time they’re some of our closest friends, it’s just that I feel like I haven’t gotten the chance to struggle because I feel like the people here think we’re delicate flowers. And then there’s Filipino culture where saying no, or declining something (like accompaniment) could be seen as personally hurtful. There are little struggles daily, but I’ve never felt lost. I didn’t come into the internship hoping to feel lost or useless because other people won’t allow us to try to get around on our own, and I’ve grown to appreciate the constant and dedicated supervision here because it makes me feel extremely safe. I wasn’t expecting to feel safe in a country that the US Embassy has travel warnings for, but in every municipality we’ve been in, the community takes AMAZING care of us. I would honestly equate how we are welcomed and treated to being children of those around us. Every mayor has said something along the lines of, your safety is of utmost importance, and in every town the police force introduces themselves to us, and it’s made clear that if we have any problems, that they will help up immediately.

The most rewarding aspect of the trip so far has been making friends with people in the communities. Even though in each place we’re only there for a few weeks, I feel like I’ve made forever friends. Being able to relate and communicate and connect on levels that I never thought were going to be possible in a foreign country surprised me, and even though I’ll never forget the educational experiences I’ve had during the internship, it’s 100% the people that have made the biggest impact on my life.

5. What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience?

I’ve learned that feeling useless and being useful are not mutually exclusive. There’s a western cultural idea that unless you feel like you are being useful, you’re most likely not actually being useful. As an undergraduate medical student hopeful in medical settings, you have to realize you can’t be useful in the ways you hope to be one day, and that this feeling is okay. It’s not okay for you to give shots, or cut the umbilical cord, or diagnose a tropical skin infection, but this doesn’t mean you can’t help - and it’s this that I’ve come to realize. Holding someone’s hand,

smiling in the face of pain to help it lessen its grasp, or singing a silly song to calm someone's nerves are all important jobs - and they're all jobs I can do. Busy work is another thing that you can't be scared of, and I've learned to embrace it. I always used to say that I hated busy work in school, but this internship has taught me to see it in a different light. Just because you don't love what you're doing right in the moment doesn't mean that the task at hand isn't teaching you, or preparing you for something bigger.

Set 3:

1. Describe a day in your life - what is your work schedule like, what do you do after work, how do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?

I usually get up around 6:30 or 7am, and eat breakfast right away. It's safe to say that we need to be at the RHU by 8 or 8:30am Monday through Friday, and depending on the municipality we're in we either walk, or get driven to work. We usually leave the clinic between 4:30 and 5:30pm, and have a short rest when we get home. After work we like to go swimming, hang out with friends at our homestay houses, journal/blog, work out, or watch a tv show together. It's been very easy to balance work and exploring life outside of work because everyone I'm here with is on the same page in terms of work goals. We all like to spend as much time in the clinic as possible, and there's never a debate whether we should leave early.

2. Housing: What is your living situation like? Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead? If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.

Living situations have been great in every town we've been in. That being said they're been different in every town we've been to. In Alcantara, we were in an actual house (Dr. Jobin's aunt's house), and most of us had our own rooms. In Calatrava, we stayed on the Vice Mayor's compound because he has a view guest rooms in the back of his property (almost like a motel), and then his mother was our main caretaker. While there, we shared rooms with three people in one, and then two in the other. Now in our last location of Quezon, we are staying in the same house that Dr. Hana stays in, and we are all sharing a room again, with two people sharing a queen bed, and one person in a full bed. I can't say that there were ever other options for us to chose from. We had to go with the flow, and everything ended up working out just fine. We've been more than comfortable in whatever location we've been.

3. Finances: How is your budget working out for you? Are you spending more of less that what you expected? How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc? What would you do differently knowing what you know now?

Being in Manila is much more expensive than any of the rural locations we've been (as was expected). But since 90% of the internship has been spent on a rural island, budgeting hasn't been an issue. What we spend the most money on is ice cream, which is only 20 pesos or 50 cents. It's honestly been very cheap, even when we've had to pay for lunch. Most of the time we've had to pay for lunch ourselves, but it's been very cheap (every meal has been under \$5 US dollars), but in our last location Quezon, the local preceptor was able to budget and coordinate a way to include lunch in the price we payed up front. I've never said "no" to something here yet, whether that be food, travel, or some material good and by the end of the

trip I won't have spent more than \$500 US dollars total for 10 weeks, which is less than \$50 dollars a week even with multiple weekend trips thrown in there (aka Boracay).

4. Travel and Transportation: How do you typically get around town and to work? Are you satisfied with that choice? Would you recommend other options? Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on time off? How do you manage that? What do you recommend for travel options? Where do you recommend exploring?

Typically we walk around town, and to get to and from work we either have been driven, take a tricycle, or walk. I've been more than satisfied with our travel arrangements or choices. It's definitely depended on where we were whether we even had a choice in terms of our transportation, because of where we were living. In Alcantara our homestay was more than 5km away from the RHU, which is walkable, but we were either driven by Dr. Jobin's dad James, or we took a tricycle every morning/night. Being far away from the town proper meant that we didn't have a lot of autonomy moving around the town, and we were basically confined to the house after work. In Calatrava and Quezon, we were/are living less than a 5 min walk away from work. We have lots of time to explore the surrounding area after work, and walk to little restaurants, or barangays, or stores. In Calatrava, there were a few geographically isolated barangays that we had to take a small boat to and from, but we were always with clinic staff during that journey. Here are some recommendations for traveling...

Alcantara: Looc Bay Fish sanctuary, and Aglicay Beach Resort

Calatrava: Capital island of Romblon, and Boracay

Quezon: Local beaches, and the city of Lucena

Set 2:

1. How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this align with your professional goals that you set for yourself? What would you like to achieve in the remainder of your internship?

One of my professional goals was to learn how medical personnel deal with lack of personnel and infrastructure in rural areas, and one of the first things I realized when I got to the Alcantara RHU, is that Dr. Jobin can't possibly handle all these patients himself. He said that he learned that very quickly too because he was spreading himself too thin. He trained his nurses and midwives to do procedures that they wouldn't teach in nursing/midwife programs because he needed to make sure that if he wasn't there, they could handle things on their own. In the remainder of my internship I hope to continue to grow my professional relationships with the doctors I'm working with so that I could possibly gain references for later in life (grad school/ job applications).

2. How are things going relative to your personal goals? In which areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand? What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?

Two of my biggest personal goals were to ask questions, and to hopefully better understand future career goals. So far, I think I'm doing a good job asking questions. A lot of the students in my group ask a lot of questions too, and that further pushes my thinking and questions in situations so I've had a lot of opportunities to ask away! I hope I can keep this up (I know it's

kinda early to tell how I will really do at this personal goal). I hope that the rest of my internship allows me to better understand my future career goals. Being in the RHU in Alcantara has helped me cement that I want to work in healthcare, but I don't know in what way yet. Maybe I won't have this figured out by the time I leave, but I hope that I have experiences that make me really think about what I want to do once I graduate.

3. How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals? What kinds of experiences have stood out to you so far? What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?

In general, I think my cross-cultural goals have been going the best so far. I wasn't expecting to feel so at home, and as quickly as I did in Alcantara. I think I can attribute this to my first x-cultural goal of leaving prejudice behind in Lake Oswego. I've made sure to keep an open mindset about everything so far, and I think things would have been really stressful if I hadn't. We weren't told a lot about where we would be living and what our days would be like on the rural island, and that in itself is stressful. I've never been somewhere without my family, let alone half way around the globe, immersed in a culture I'm not familiar with. But I just smiled through everything, and said yes whenever asked if something would be okay, and it turned out perfectly! I've also tried a lot of really cool/different food that I would have never tried at home, and I ended up loving (most of) them. There's this dish called sisig, which is traditionally chopped up and fried pig face, and it's so good! I also tried liver (which I didn't like), and intestine bbq which I think I would have loved if I grew up eating it... I liked it, but I don't think I would ever ask for it. I've gotten the opportunity to try some of my new favorite fruits already too! Mangosteen, Rambutan, and Dragon Fruit are all fruits I'd never had before, but they are all on my favorites list. Before I leave this first homestay, I really want to go to church with Narlyn and Beth who are two friends that I've made here. I think that religion plays such a huge role in communities everywhere, and experiencing church in the Philippines would give me a great x-cultural lens to view other experiences through.

Set 1:

1. What are your initial impressions of the organization and an overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing; how does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

We honestly haven't started doing work yet. This first week has been an in-depth crash course on the history of the culture and people in the Philippines. They have been trying to provide us with a framework for what we will be encountering in the rural islands with lectures with the DOP and WHO, learning about public health policy and structure of the health care system in the Philippines. We just got our schedule yesterday (the 10 week interns - Anisha and I don't have complete schedules yet just because it is too hard for them to plan that far in advance). The schedule for our first island, Romblon, looks awesome though. I will be attaching a copy of it with this email... and once we've started work on the islands I'll be able to answer this question more thoroughly.

2. What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?

The level of English spoken here amazes me. I knew that the majority of people knew some English, but I thought language barriers were going to be more of an issue - currently I am have absolutely no trouble communicating. I know this is going to change on the rural islands.

3. What was your greatest anxiety prior to departing and how do you feel about that now that you have arrived?

My greatest anxiety prior to departing was my physical health, specifically my skin. I had a bad case of impetigo about a week before my departing flight and I was really worried it wasn't going to be healed by the time I arrived. Good news is it did heal up, and that's no longer a worry. However, my skin's health is not doing well in the city. I wonder if it is the combination of the pollution with the humidity and heat, but I have a rash all over my forehead and sides of my face, and I've self diagnosed a rash behind my left ear as seborrheic dermatitis, and I've been self medicating everything with a hydrocortisone cream. So far, the cream has been keeping everything at bay, but if it gets worse I will bring it to Dr. Joel's attention. I am also trying to keep in mind that I've only been here for a few days, and my skin really needs time to adjust. The rashes aren't painful, or incredibly itchy - they mainly just make me self conscious (but these are nowhere as bad as my impetigo episode - I'm really trying to put everything into perspective).