



Goodbye, Durban

By Selina Liu | July 10, 2012

Time flies; I can't believe my time in Durban, South Africa is coming to an end. Durban is a beautiful port city on the eastern coast of South Africa. The weather here is sunny and warm; perfect beach weather. I adore the fact that I can go to the beach after work. I had a great time working in the hospital, interacting with the locals, and getting to know the local culture.

I am interning in two different hospitals in Durban; St. Mary and King Edward Hospital. St. Mary is a public, catholic mission hospital with 200 beds. Based on the introductory video we saw, three out of four patients admitted to St. Mary are HIV infected. On the first day of my rotation, I observed a cesarean section in the theater, which is the equivalent of operating room in the United States. I spent majority of my time there in ARV pediatric clinics where I saw many HIV-positive mothers bringing their children to the clinic. I always thought it's going to be emotionally difficult facing children who are HIV-positive or born in a HIV-positive family. In reality, I loved spending time with the children and let their bright smiles melt my heart. It's also comforting to see that mothers are trying their best to prevent their children from getting infected with HIV. By talking to the nurses, I learned that children born to HIV-positive mothers are unlikely to be infected with HIV as long as the mother is careful with feeding and is on ARV treatment.



While in Durban, I am also interning in King Edward Hospital. Kind Edward is a secondary hospital built 75 years ago. It is an academic hospital associated with University of Kaw Zulu-Natal. Everything here looks really dated, very different from the modern and sterile hospitals in the United States. Although the facility looks out-dated, the pediatric department is renowned across the province. I started my rotation in the department of pediatric. While I spent time doing ward rounds with the consultants and medical students, I learned about different diseases as well as the difficulties each patient was facing. The senior consultant in department of pediatric is very experienced. I was always

amazed at his ability to correlate what he observed or felt with certain diseases. He stresses on the importance of physical exam and told me multiple times that the patient's body will give you the diagnosis if a proper physical exam is done. From him, I learned the basics of physical exam. I also experienced the importance of physical exam.

While rotating in the pediatric department, I also went to the nursery where I observed how new borns are monitored. In addition, I spent a few days in pediatric ARV (anti-retroviral clinic). Sitting in a counseling session was emotionally difficult for me; I not only heard, but also observed how HIV impacts the society and affects people's lives financially, emotionally and socially. In addition to the pediatric department, I also rotated through the department of surgery in King Edward Hospital. I did round with the consultant and the medical students where I learned about causes and treatment for different diseases especially hernia and obstructive jaundice. I had the opportunity to observe several general surgeries; most of them were hernia repairs.



Tomorrow, I will be on my flight to Cape Town, a city on the southwestern coast of South Africa. Having spent such a wonderful time in Durban, It is hard to say goodbye. At the same time, I am excited for Cape Town; to start new rotations and be able to compare the hospitals in the two cities. I think I'll have a great time there.