



Sawubona from South Africa

By Stella Chiu | September 6, 2010

Sawubona from South Africa! It means hello in Zulu. I spent the last 5 weeks in Durban, South Africa doing clinical rotations at public hospitals and clinics. I got to see the broad range of healthcare in this beautiful country. At King Edwards Hospital I was in the pediatric and surgery ward for 2 weeks. I knew TB and HIV were prevalent in South Africa but didn't realize the extent of the damage until I saw that almost every patient was HIV positive with opportunistic infections such as TB. At the rural clinics I experienced the limits of the healthcare system. Lack of medical supplies, doctors, staff, funds, and education were my daily encounters. For instance, at the Malagasy Clinic, the staff consisted of one nurse and several students to manage at least 30 patients daily. The facility was falling apart and in very poor shape. We also had an opportunity to visit a traditional healer (witchdoctor) and learned about how they treated patients. It brought my attention to the ongoing battle between traditional medicine and modern medicine. At St. Mary's Hospital a child was put in the intensive care unit because his mother had given him Zulu medicine that became toxic. In addition to the clinical rotations, I've enjoyed my time with the Child Family Health International (CFHI) group. We've jumped off the world's highest gorge swing at Oribi Gorge, went on a safari, traveled to St. Lucia, watched the World Cup games at the FIFA FanFest, ate at one of the world's 32 revolving restaurants, and took a sky car up to the top of Moses Mabhida Stadium. This internship has been a great experience. I saw diseases and illnesses that I would never see in the United States. South Africa is a hotspot for TB and HIV and thus it's the best place to learn how to battle these epidemics. I will be continuing my rotations in Cape Town for the next 5 weeks. I can't wait to see what experiences Cape Town will bring me. Sala kehla!

