

Question 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?**

My initial impression of my program here at Pravara was that it was a humble but innovative program. I had the chance to receive orientations detailing how CSM began and some of the various programs within it and the nursing college. It all sounded so inspiring how such a small, poor, uneducated community came together to rise economically, fight ignorance and improve health. That said, there were also some expectation pitfalls. I loved the ideas behind everything that they were preaching and aiming to practice, but still have trouble getting past some of the inadequacies of their tactics. This mainly falls down to a failure to follow Standard Precautions. Absolutely no one uses gloves here! So many things are done in an unsanitary way that I want to sit them down and lecture them about the necessity of constant hand-washing and glove usage to prevent nosocomial infection. However, I also remind myself that these may be things that they cannot afford financially to practice all the time, like stocking thousands of reusable gloves. I remind myself that compared to the numerous health hazards and poverty rates here in India this is really an advanced health facility. So I bite my tongue and continue to politely observe their methodologies.

Other than this, the program has thus far adequately matched my expectations. I knew to expect that people here would be less concerned with timing and strict scheduling (as I am used to in America) so when this happened, I was not upset. The people here have more than made up for any misgivings I may have had. They are all so nice and continuously go out of their way to include me and make me feel at home, like I am family. It is so nice to have that feeling away from home.

- 2) What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?**

Upon arrival, the first thing that hit me was the volume of India. As soon as I left the quiet, structured airport, I was thrust onto the bumpy streets of Mumbai surrounded by the fast-paced hustle and bustle of noisy, packed city. I was not in simple, mild-mannered Oregon anymore, and at first it was hard to accept. India is a slap in the face when you first get there, whether it's the heat, the noise, or the swarms of people, it hits you. Luckily Loni is much more subdued, at least in comparison to Mumbai. Driving is still scary and it is horrendously hot, but the people are all kind and everything is simplified down to a smaller more rural level.

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

I had two main anxieties prior to departure: flying alone with a complicated flight plan and making friends - both of which dissolved quickly when the time came to face them. I actually

found that I got in the swing of things with the rushing through multiple airports and that I actually quite enjoy flying, even on the long flights. And when I arrived in Loni, I actually met a good friend that night in the other international student: Leeza from the Maldives Islands. She may not have been from America but we bonded quickly and she has been a monumental help in getting me familiar with the campus and the program and making other friends. It is only week two and I already have a few good friends whom I can hang out with. Besides, people are so nice here, especially to guests as a part of their culture, that I would have made friends on my own easily and have a couple of times.

Question 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 next half of your internship?**

Now that I have settled into my fourth week here at Pravara, I find that I am getting more into the swing of my internship routine. I am able to adapt to each week's changing schedule and site. On the downside though, I find that I am getting a bit more tired of simple observation and wishing I had the ability to help in a more tangible way. However, due to my lack of language skills and certain trainings, I am very limited in this way, so I am working on making due with that and accepting my position. I am hopeful though that I might be taught more skills that I can utilize and will be vocal about doing so.

In terms of my career goals, as stated, I still wish that I could learn some actual nursing skills. However, just through observation I am learning a lot in contribution to my professional focus. I am gaining a wider public health lens which allows me to see the influence of culture/tradition on health perceptions here. I am also getting the opportunity to see a lot of antenatal care - which I am beginning to really consider as a possible future specialty area. I have fulfilled one of my professional goals in that I have requested shadowing time in particular areas of nursing interest. This will not come until the end of my internship though. In addition, I think another of my goals will be accomplished: that of presenting some suggestions for CSM, through its required report that will be due at the end of my internship. At least, I'm assuming that is what the report will entail. Otherwise, I'm not sure how or if I'll accomplish this. In the next half of my internship, I hope to: (1) learn a few small skills, (2) shadow more in a medical setting, (3) gain more experience in maternal care (ANC - PNC), (4) to gain a letter of recommendation from Dr. Soma, and (5) submit public health suggestions/ideas to CSM.

- 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?**

As far as my goals for personal development go, I have indeed gained confidence in my ability to travel alone and to adjust to an entirely new environment. I am still in the process of overcoming homesickness and culture shock and learning to become less dependent on my

American comforts. That is something that may take me the whole internship to overcome/master, but I am actively working at it. In addition, week by week I am finding that I am becoming comfortable in the routines of my site, meeting new people, and familiarizing myself with new foods and customs.

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?

For my cross-cultural goals, I have definitely learned a bit about local approaches to healthcare here. I think I will learn more and gain a fuller understanding in the next few weeks though, especially if I visit the tribal villages I think. I have made a couple of good student friendships and have indeed gotten the chance to engage in a few discussions about our cultural differences. It also has given me the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about their unique culture, things I didn't know before. The only downside here is that it is difficult to maintain these friendships after I leave the posting/site where I cultivated them. It's more difficult to meet up with such differing schedules. Lastly, as far as learning more about appropriate cultural attire, I have learned a bit and have actually purchased a couple of Indian outfits (including a sari). Unfortunately I cannot afford to buy a whole wardrobe of clothes for everyday so I'm still having to rotate the same couple of t-shirts and capris. It gets very old and I really wish I had brought a couple more outfits with me. I am also realizing how large and small the gap is between American and Indian clothing expectations. I see many students walking around in jeans and t-shirts themselves so it seems as though my attire should not stand out so much. However, there are still some unspoken social expectations, the one I struggle most with being the disapproval of tank-tops/bare shoulders. As much as I sometimes want to simplify my wear down to a simple tank-top, which nobody would even think twice about in America, I have to force myself to stick it out in the dense heat. I am already the only white person probably within a hundred miles of here so I should try to do my best to not stand out any more than I already do.

Question 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?

Well, my posting site varies by week, but my day generally goes something like this:

I wake up somewhere between 7-7:30 am, depending on whether or not I need to take a shower. I get dressed and meet with Leeza at about 8am to go to the mess hall for breakfast. We are back to our rooms by about 8:30am and I finish getting ready for the day. We leave our dorm by about 9am for whatever posting we have that week (if we are to be somewhere at 9, since everybody here is always a good fifteen minutes behind we find that it is best if we leave so that we get there a little after the hour).

We spend our day observing at our posting and helping in whatever limited way that we are encouraged to whether it be recording some information, checking vitals or whatever. About

95% of my day is spent in simple observation though. Things are explained to me and I in turn ask any questions I have. This process runs from about 9-12:30pm when we break for lunch and then again from 2-5pm in the afternoon.

After my internship posting, I usually return to my room to rest for a little bit. Recently I have joined the local women's gym so just before 6pm I might head over there to work-out until dinner time. Otherwise, I continue to rest, watch television, read, or go on the internet until about 7:30pm when dinner is served. Leeza and I are usually back to our rooms after dinner by about 8-8:30pm when I get ready for bed and just relax until about 10-11pm when I give in to sleep.

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.

I currently reside in Pravara's NRI hostel. It is actually the nicest hostel on campus from what I hear and that is easy to believe. It is very nice and comfortable. I am located in one of the hostel's guest rooms so it is equipped with my own mini fridge, A/C, and cable television which are all really wonderful to have. I also have my own bathroom with an American toilet, much better than some of the community bathrooms I have seen here. I definitely think that this is the best choice for residence while interning at PMT.

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

Finances are, I will admit, a bit of a mystery for me still. I'm not entirely sure how much overall I have spent here in the last 7 weeks but I'm guessing it is somewhere in the vicinity of \$250-300. This is a bit more than I thought I would spend here as I assumed I wouldn't want to buy too much and that I would eat all of my meals from the dining hall. However, realizing how much outside food, shopping and recreation I have done, this is actually pretty reasonable. Things are significantly cheaper here, which is one reason I purchase more than expected. Every week I buy some outside food – mostly small snacks and fruit from local shops and at least one meal. This costs perhaps around 200-350 INR or about \$4-7. One area that I have perhaps gone a little overboard in is purchasing clothing. I ended up buying two saris and multiple Indian outfits. These have ranged from 149-1,000INR or about \$3-\$20 plus additional charges for tailoring. It's hard to regret this splurge though because I find that I really do feel better about myself when I am blending in and dressing in more traditional Indian clothing. Recreational activities are definitely the largest of the expenses; depending on where you go and what you do of course. Sundays are the day to get out of the small town and do something fun but the cost adds up for transportation, food, and admittance costs (which are always at least ten times higher for tourists than resident Indians). The expenses are totally worth it though!

I would advise future interns to take advantage of the country's favorable exchange rate and to not hold back on participating in all that they want to participate in. However, they should

also keep an eye on their bank account and always do the math when they're considering paying for something, figuring out what it costs in American dollars and then asking if it is worth it? I also suggest just getting perhaps 2-3,000 INR out of the ATM and making it last a good two weeks. It is a good way to regulate spending and keeping track of your weekly expense rate.

- 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?**

For the most part, I walk places on a daily basis. It is my primary mode of transportation for anywhere on campus and even most places in town. However, if I am going to the further end of Loni, say towards the bus station, I often take an auto rickshaw ("auto"). This is a decent mode of transportation for semi-short distances, or just on very hot days when you don't want to walk far. It is important to settle the pricing before you take off in it though; and you can often bargain the price down too.

Weekends are the key time for outside travelling and exploring, and unless you organize an expensive private driver, the buses are the best route to travel. I have taken the bus several times in the past few weeks alone and it has always gone quite well. When it is very busy you sometimes don't get a seat and have to stand until a seat frees up, this isn't very fun but I've only had to do it once thankfully. This is the cheapest and most effective way to travel on the weekends I think. It can be mildly stressful though at the bus stations having to inquire whether every new bus arriving is the one that you are waiting for. The wait may be long sometimes but we always find our bus eventually.

Some places that I recommend going are Shirdi, Nasik, Ellora Caves, Aurangabad, and Pune (though I never actually got to go here).

Question Set 4:

- 1) Professional: How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?**

For the most part, my coursework has provided me with the right frame of mind through which to observe everything during my internship. After studying public health for so long, I have the natural inclination to look at each health issue and ask the critical questions as to what contributes to its occurrence and rate. As with most of the common public health issues back home in the U.S., I find that the issues here often stem from ignorance, misinformation, fear and poverty. Although much of this is very difficult to overcome, education proves to continue to be the brightest hope for all social health dilemmas. So, I suppose my most important knowledge has been this idea that such issues can be overcome or at least diminished through empowerment and education.

- 2) Cross Cultural: Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?**

Honestly, I cannot really recall any particular moment when I made some embarrassing cultural mistake or misinterpretation or anything. However, there were a couple of instances in which I became very aware through conversation of the vast cultural differences between the marital practices of my country and others. The first occurred in speaking with the other exchange student from Maldives about how husbands are able to take multiple wives and divorce their wives whenever they want but it can take up to three filings and nine months for a woman to even divorce her husband if they have children. The second occurred in speaking with another student about the practice of arranged marriage here in India and how she was debating participating in this or pursuing a love marriage. In both of these instances, I tried my best to simply listen and hold my critical, feminist tongue. However, I did manage to share my perspective in a limited and calculated way so as to not deliver any offence. I honestly think that I handled these situations well and responded in culturally sensitive ways. I don't think there would have been a better way to handle them.

3) Personal: What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience?

One of the most important things that I have learned about myself is that I have the ability to adapt. Growing up, I have always been a home-body; I never even went to sleep-away camp because I feared being away from my home for a week. However, now I find that I am not so limited in needing certain familiar faces or “necessities” for everyday life; that I am able to find a way to fit in and define a role for myself in a completely foreign world. I know that I can miss home and still feel a sense of home here because it is a home that I have created for myself. This helps me to develop faith in myself that I can be an independent person and pursue a life and career anywhere I please. It gives me a sense of confident freedom. I am also proud to have solidified my choice of career course. Before coming, I was having some doubts as to whether nursing was going to be the right choice for me, whether I could even be a good nurse. However, after observing so many individual nurses and shadowing in multiple different wards, I feel like I have been able to see my future self performing duties in each place. This experience has made my picture of the future a little more concrete in that I can more clearly see myself working as a nurse. I know now that I can handle the scary and more graphic sides of nursing care because I have seen much of it here and it has not diminished my desire to provide such care. So, in addition to confident freedom, I have gained a sense of confident direction.

Question Set 5:

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

In defining the workplace culture here, I would have to say that it is relaxed and very matter of fact. By this, I mean that people here are always very calm and do things at their own pace without being dominated by any time clock, and that issues are discussed and approached very systematically, with little emotion. Luckily, I had been made aware of the Indians' lax

attitude towards time before coming so I had already adjusted my cultural lens in this respect. It still managed to somewhat surprise me though every time that I showed up early for a meeting or was left waiting on someone. The organization's somewhat nonchalant attitude though did surprise me to a greater extent. With such a complex and loud culture in all other respects, I expected the work environment here to be equally so. However, just as people are calm and relaxed in reference to time, they are also very cool in their working method and address of problems (not that they don't often yell when giving orders or criticisms to each other). I do not mean this in a negative way but just that they acknowledge and accept their issues and address them very logically and decisively. Where I expected emotionality I found composition.

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

I suppose that I would say: be smart, be respectful, and be positive. It is important to understand your limitations as a foreigner in regards to certain things like heat exposure, travelling to unsafe areas, eating local dishes, and especially to drinking safe water. It is essential to understand that our microflora is different than those of the people here so while they may be able to eat or drink something that looks safe, it may affect us very differently. Being respectful involves understanding the expectations of your host culture. This might include taking your shoes off before entering specific places, eating with your hands, or dressing modestly. Much of this you learn as you go, and reflecting these lessons in your behavior is a good way to show respect to their culture. People here tend to be very impressed when you put in the effort to wear a sari or say a phrase in the local language.

Lastly, it is so important to remain positive throughout your experience. There will most definitely be times when culture shock hits your or days when you feel like you just need your mom or your friend by your side. Studying abroad always comes with high and low points, but actively trying to promote the positive side of every situation will definitely increase the high points and diminish the low ones. I was absolutely scared to come here and travel alone but I consistently reminded myself that things will occasionally go wrong but that in the grand scheme when I look back on this internship they won't be the things I remember, or I will remember them and laugh. It's all part of your experience's story.

Final Question Set:

1) Professional: Upon reflecting on your internship experience, are you more or less committed to a career in this field? What experiences have contributed to this?

I am definitely even more dedicated to my career path in medicine than I ever was. Much of this inspiration has come from my solidified comfort in the medical setting. Being able to objectively view surgeries, procedures, and consultations has helped me to formulate an image of myself performing these very practices in the future. It has also helped me to be able to see all of the different duties a nurse can perform – both in a clinical and public health sense. I have gained a sense of the knowledge that the nurses work with as well as the power hierarchy that they fit

into in the chain of hospital chain of command. It is important that I saw how doctors and nurses communicate and work with each other, in addition to how the nursing community operates in and of itself. Though of course some of these aspects differ in degrees from the U.S. healthcare system, I still believe that many of the observations and lessons will hold true. Overall, I am just able to better picture myself in the nursing role, particularly as a travelling nurse after gaining ample understanding of ethnic diversity.

2) Cross Cultural: Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how did your impressions of the host culture change? What new sources of information shaped your perspectives?

A lot of my pre-departure notes detailed my concerns and worries regarding the host site. However, in regards to the host culture, I was very excited for the exposure. The Indian culture was one of the big reasons why I chose to intern in this country. I expected it to be rich and wildly different than American culture. I was not disappointed. I had numerous opportunities to gain this cultural perspective by talking with many friends and by simply observing life. The greatest cultural lesson that I have learned about India is that faith and family are everything. Your family is your life and your life serves your faith. They also put a great emphasis on fate, which I found was something I could identify with. I suppose this was actually something that I found surprised me – that in learning about the cultural differences between India and America, I would find that I personally had a lot in common with their culture of beliefs. I also hold fate, family and my faith as the cornerstones of my life.

3) Personal: What has been the greatest challenge personally on this internship (reflect upon pre-departure all the way through your re-entry back home)? What has been the greatest reward?

I would have to concede that my greatest challenge was in the language barrier dividing me from the native people. This was not something that I would have suspected pre-departure but in reflecting now, I find that it was truly evident. I thoroughly all of my observational opportunities during this internship, but there were numerous instances when I felt that I could have done more or learned more had I been able to communicate better with the patients and staff. This is especially true for my public health interest. I would have loved to have been able to interview some of the patients to ask them personally about their backgrounds and gain an understanding of the health knowledge base. At the very least, I would have loved to have been able to comfort them when I saw that they were scared or in pain. I was able to hold their hands sometimes but, like I said, I would have liked to do more.

The greatest reward on the other hand would probably be the immense self-confidence that I have gained from this internship. I have always been a play-it-safe introvert, who has pursued very few adventures in life. This is the biggest thing that I have done for myself, ever. Many of my family and friends doubted my follow-through and ability to complete such a daring endeavor. So, I am proud that I could prove them wrong and prove my own self-doubts wrong. I now know that the world is at my feet and I can thrive and prosper anywhere. I also feel more self-assured to fearlessly go after the other goals in my life. If I can travel half-way across the

world all alone and reconstruct my lifestyle to accommodate one that is different in nearly every way, then I think that I can do just about anything so long as I hold on to this passion.