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Center for Social Medicine, India

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?

So far the organization is wonderful, it provides free services to populations that do not have the means to receive it. You can tell the population is very grateful for PMT. I haven't done very much work at all this first week, in fact all we have done is tour the facilities. It is kind of dull because every center & sub-center is exactly the same. Next week should align better with my professional goals as we visit Nashik to observe interventions against HIV/STIs in FSW & MSM.

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

The amount of miscommunication was overwhelming. When I arrived there were 6 students from Drake University who had been there for a day already, and we were thrown into the middle of their orientation. I was lost and felt like I missed so much information. I also felt rushed to catch up to the other students, it was very stressful and frustrating, and I also had only four hours of sleep from my 28 hour journey. The directors didn't give us the same amount of time to go over items about CSM-PMT as the Drake students, so I found myself asking them questions.

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

My greatest anxiety about leaving home was just that, leaving home. Why would I choose to leave my loved ones for two and a half months? It has been very difficult, because I would love to be experiencing this new culture alongside my friends and family. However the days have been going by fast and I do not find myself missing home until the evening when I have more down time. It's the inner strength to carry out this incredible journey that I am building up each day while in Loni.

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?

- Know when the work load is too much, and accept that it is okay and necessary to ask for help
- Maintain consistency, but also take into account quality versus quantity when developing

community programs

- Network with individuals associated with Center for Social Medicine

For the most part things are going well, there has only been one instance where our preceptor recommended we visit Oncology. Neither of us had wanted to in the first place but he was adamant we go, so we agreed. It was the worst situation, we were in the busiest department of the hospital with 10 physicians who didn't have time to translate what was happening. At one point they thought we were in the way and made us sit in the corner of the room, I was extremely frustrated. We went straight to our preceptor and he reassigned us for the rest of the day. I am embracing my inner strength to know what will provide the best experience to gain knowledge and professionalism while at CSM, and my preceptor has respected my ability to know what is right for me. I have also been able to network with many individuals involved at PMT. I would like to continue exactly how I am now, Oncology has been the only hiccup so I will be happy if it continues this way.

2. Personal development

- Be more personal; take time to learn new things about other interns
- Maintain good health while abroad, eat healthy and make sure to get adequate amounts of nutrients
- Live ethically, abide by all social norms in my host country and understand that I am guest and will not change belief systems

I have been able to make new friends, ones I know will be lifetime friends. They answer all my cultural questions and help me navigate around Loni. I haven't had any trouble with nutrition as that I find the food to be great. I have also been respectful to cultural differences, I always dress modestly, I never react to something I may find wrong, and because I know I cannot change it. Rotations let me encounter many things I would be shocked to see in the US, such as breastfeeding when HIV+, this is not allowed in the US but it is encouraged in India. Kaylen and I go on walks frequently before dinner, I would like to keep this up and maybe make it a nightly habit to increase my health while here. The food is carb overloaded, both of us are more worried about gaining weight rather than losing.

3. Cross-cultural understanding

- React less and learn to respond and work more
- Be accepting of uncomfortable situations and learn from them
- Evaluate cultural differences that are not in the United States and observe how they may differ from our belief system

Relating back to the previous statement, I did not react to the HIV+ breastfeeding statement, even when the Physician said HIV is not passed through breast milk. It has been engraved into my knowledge that HIV does pass through breast milk, but there is no reason to argue because I cannot change that belief. The labor rooms are also very different and challenge my acceptance, to me the physicians come off as abusive. They yell, slap, hit these women in labor, something unimaginable in the US. However, the physicians say that these women do not understand how

labor works, they do not comprehend the idea of pushing and so the aggression is needed to emphasize the action. I want to experience the other parts of HIV among this population, I have found that many physicians state TB has a larger discrimination than HIV patients. I would like to know what the reasoning behind this as a culture is.

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?

My day usually starts at 7:40 am, I wake up without an alarm due to the birds outside my window. This is usually when I talk to my friends and family, the internet is better in the morning. Kaylen and I head to breakfast around 8:30 if posted in surgery, and 8:45 if in OPD. After we go straight to our posting until 1:00 pm, sometimes our physician that day will let us go sooner for lunch. Lunch goes until 2:15 or 2:30, the physicians tell us when we should be back. We then head back to the hospital till 5:00 pm. After work we sometimes grab coffee/tea with friends. If not we go back to our hostel and relax. Most evenings a friend has invited us somewhere, whether it be dinner or just a walk. This almost makes it feel like I have no time to myself or let alone to tidy up my room. But I am happy we have made such great friends. Life and work feel quite balanced, I see many of our friends while in the hospital, sometimes they stop by our posting just to say hi. Plus my friends and family back home do not feel neglected and I don't feel as if I have been missing out culturally in India.

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.

The hostel is great, especially based on what other students at PMT share about their rooms. This room is far larger than my dorm at OSU, plus I have my own bathroom. You can tell PMT strives to keep us happy and make sure we don't feel too out of our element. I would say that can be seen in the fact they provide us with toilet paper. I wouldn't choose any other hostel because this one is geared towards foreign students. For future interns I would recommend bringing a light blanket, they provide a light one as well as a wool one but nights are cold here. I would also recommend bringing your own towels and hand soap. Hand soap is not provided, but there is some available at the local store. There is a TV with English movie channels that I believe is fairly new based on what previous interns have stated. It is really nice to have, and the movies are well known. CSM has also provided us with lunch boxes, I think this is new as well. If interns plan to do their own laundry like I do I recommend bringing a clothes line and if you do not have a preference on laundry detergent the store has a bag for \$1.60 that will last my entire stay. I would also say to bring small garbage bags and sandwich bags, I bought a pack from dollar tree and they have been super helpful. Also to bring clothes hangers, the closet only had three and I brought some additional due to a previous intern. Lastly for females I would recommend bringing enough female hygiene products to last your entire stay, the store has a small selection that are overpriced and not what you find at home.

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?

My budget is going great, I am spending just as much as I thought I would. Food is cheap, you can spend about \$5 on an entire meal, meaning entrée, side, and drink. If you go to a fancier restaurant say in Mumbai, it could reach \$15. The only recreation we have had to pay for was at Ellora/Ajanta Caves where it's around \$5 to get into each. For traveling we have split the cost of personal drivers with the Drake students, costing about \$25 for two days' worth of travel. We took a sleeper bus there and seated bus back to/from Mumbai which cost about \$15 total as well. I have been able to use my credit card which has no foreign transaction fees at fancier restaurants and to book our hotels. I would recommend bringing an ATM card, there is a machine right across campus that doesn't charge Kaylen. I brought about \$500 USD in cash that I exchanged and have my credit card as a backup, it has been just fine so far. This is including the occasional snack purchase or meal out, but friends love to buy dinner for us and we have learned it is rude to say no.

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?

We walk everywhere, but I believe it is 10x better because you actually get to hear and smell your surroundings. The hospital is just across the street, and even the local shop is in walking distance, I am more than satisfied, it would almost be silly to have a bike for work because the lock up area is farther than just walking. Making friends has been great when it comes to exploring, especially for market days on Wednesday. Our friends help us bargain because these sellers do not speak English and the Marathi numbers are different than ours. If we want to see something in town we always ask our friends first and they usually offer to take us there, they do not want us to be ripped off or end up somewhere we shouldn't. I recommend Aurangabad, just be prepared to be bombarded by photos, Nashik (Sula vineyards is gorgeous), Shirdi (they have a dominos), Mumbai is great for a weekend trip, and hopefully I can say Pune and Goa as we head there over the next couple of weekends.

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?

My coursework in Public Health has been beneficial to my time here at CSM as that prevention is the key component to this organization. For our rotations in the hospital having understanding with medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, and working as a caregiver has allowed me to understand physicians. I would say it may be difficult to understand exactly what is happening without these concepts but every person at PMT, student, intern, physician, etc. has answered all of my questions. So even if a student does not comprehend a specific area, questions are always welcomed. Kaylen and I have had to explain many times that we are not physicians, all of the

students our age are indeed medical doctors. Explaining the U.S. education system is difficult but sometimes necessary.

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

I actually haven't had many misunderstandings but I can thank that to my constant questioning. If I do not understand what a person is trying to tell I keep asking questions until I do understand. There has only been one sort of misunderstanding, I would say culturally embarrassing instead. I was asking a friend about chocolate bars, as that I like dark chocolate but it is not common in India. She knew of one brand and showed me a picture of it, it had a red label and I thought that would be easy to ask for. I immediately told my friend "Oh good I'll just ask for the red label." Her face went completely serious as she told me I cannot do that, it turns out Red Label is a brand of alcohol in India and Loni is a dry village. Not only would the store clerk have judged me for wanting alcohol but I could have been in a lot of trouble for asking. I felt my face burn with embarrassment but I am thankful it happened with a friend who is willing to prevent the misunderstanding and not with a complete stranger. I have now memorized the chocolate, it's called Bourneville.

3. Personal: What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience? What has been the greatest personal challenge? What has been the greatest reward?

I have learned that I love to talk to strangers. Every friend we have made has said that I talk more than anyone else they have ever met. This also stood out when Kaylen and I taught a health workout at a private school, I loved teaching the class about health. I have been thinking about an MPH in Community Health Education for some time, this workshop clarified that I truly enjoy teaching others how to stay healthy. Before I left for India I was nervous to leave my loved ones, even the first two weeks were difficult. Yet now that I have adapted to the culture and made incredible friends, I am nervous to go home. I never imagined I would be uncomfortable to go home, but these cultures are incredibly different. It took me over two weeks to get used to India, and now I am worried it may take some time to get used to Oregon again. Yet I have experienced so many incredible things in India that I would never see in the U.S., the miracle of life and universal medicine is incredible. I will never take for granted the value of life now from my time in India.

Question Set 5:

1. Future Paths: Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths? Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) while abroad to learn about the field?

I haven't learned about any new positions while interning, but I come from a medical field and have a good background so I wasn't expecting anything new. I did have one informal interview with Dr. Soma to discuss Female Sex Workers. When we visited Nashik, these women stuck out to me. I had many questions about Female Sex Workers that Dr. Soma was able to cover in-

depth outside of our postings. I would say that Kaylen and I treat every posting like an informal interview. We ask physicians and residents the social impacts and reasoning behind patients. This usually leads into comparison of the United States and India, and the United States does not always win. For example, India provides all HIV/AIDS treatment for free, whereas individuals in the United States have a difficult time affording their treatment.

2. Now is the time to begin thinking about how to articulate all your experiences you have been gaining for your next endeavors (job search, graduate school applications, etc.). 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.

First I would say maintaining composure when presented with unfavorable postings. For example, we were asked to spend a day in Oncology but neither Kaylen nor I really had a desire for Oncology but we went anyway. It turned out to be the worst experience, we were put into a corner and not spoken to for two hours. This would have upset some people but we maintained our professionalism until we needed to leave for lunch, and went directly to our preceptors who helped us. Second, would be open minded in healthcare. You never know what is going to come into the OPD, it may be illnesses or diseases you would never imagine. Some of these may be caused by acts we personally do not agree with, but India has taught me to be accepting and understanding of how people live their lives. Lastly, communicating what I want from opportunities, sometimes this is the first question a physician would ask us. "What do you want from me?" This may seem like a loaded question but honestly it is the nicest thing a physician can do. Now you have control of your knowledge and you can tell someone exactly what you desire from your experience. It always seems to grow once the conversation is started.

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

When we were posted in Oncology, we went because our preceptors asked us to. The OPD can see up to 200 patients in one day, meaning there is practically no time for the physicians to translate what is happening. Most cancers are not observable either, meaning we sat there staring at 10 physicians speaking Marathi to patients. It is frustrating to be put into a corner, but we understood how busy this department is, and that it just was not a good fit for us. We kindly thanked them for having us but spoke to our preceptors about the challenge we were facing. He understood our frustration and relocated us for the rest of the day. It may not feel comfortable to tell someone you dislike a department, but I felt like my time was better spent in a different area. When we first arrived to CSM, many of the students did not understand that we were not doctors. Our school system is different and students our age are in fact physicians. There were many times residents and physicians asked us questions we could not even make a guess to, or even to start IVs or suture up patients. When we started telling the physicians what we wanted from each department, we were no longer put into situations we did not belong in. People assume we have the same amount of knowledge as they do, so clarifying we just want to observe how the department functions kept us from being told to do things we were unqualified for.

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

CSM is interesting, to say the least. It seems like everyone is on a different page, no one communicates to one another. We could be told by Dr. Soma to meet at one place but then Dr. Thitame will tell us another. Or if we tell one person, they will never relay the message. In order to prevent anymore frustration we made it our own priority to tell each person our details. Coming to India I knew it would be taxing at times, and it was. I would become frustrated with their lack of punctuality or vagueness about projects, but I was expecting it. I think this was critical in order for me to just accept how the program would work. I agree with almost all of CSMs proposals, breastfeeding while HIV+ is one I do not agree with but I culturally understand their lack in other resources. Fitting into CSM was not difficult based on my Public Health views, but adjusting took some time.

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

It might sound unwelcoming, but keep your expectations low, and I mean that with the utmost sincerity. We are very privileged in the United States, and India will show you just how much. If you lose all of your preconceived notions about items and mannerisms, you will adjust quicker. For example, in the United States there is an unspoken rule to wait your turn. This does not exist in India, people will cut in front of you, and it's just a matter of time. This is a cultural thing, not a single person's attitude. You can either let it bother you, like it would in the United States, or just accept the fact that it is how things work here. Another example would be food, I am always willing to try different foods even if I have a feeling I would not enjoy it. Most of the menus will not give you a description of the item, so just go with your gut instinct and be prepared for anything. For example, I bought what looked like a Hostess Swiss Roll, the packaging had a delicious cake rolled in cream just like home. However I instead got just a chocolate bread roll, no cream at all. Kaylen and I have been living with this motto from the very beginning and we have not been upset about anything, in fact we go back to the motto and start laughing at all the silly encounters. I would rather spend my time enjoying the differences than complaining about them.