

Internship CHFI: Argentina

Hospital Córdoba

Kayla N's Final Report

Question Sets:

#1: First Impressions:

What have been your initial impressions of your host organization/work site?

My first impression of the organization has been great, the people here are so humble and truly care about the patients that they see. This goes for the same at my work site, I love the small family that I have started to grow there in just the short amount of time. I have already been invited to an asado with the group of speech therapy students, which to me is amazing and I can't wait to try traditional foods, and experience local traditions.

Provide a brief overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing.

I have started working in speech therapy, observing the different ways they use mirrors and other tools to help the patient's with their vocal exercises. As well as, observing patients with hearing problems and patients with balance issues. There was one older woman that had an accident previous to her coming in to the office which has caused a vertigo sensation when she walks, therefore the students and doctors in the office work with her on balancing exercise, they use dance therapy to help her focus on a focal point while moving about the room in certain patterns. This blew my mind!

How does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

I believe that work matches my expectations in the regard that I want to find a specialty that is as much my passion as the people that I work with. In addition, also having the respect that people are given no matter you title, is what I want in my future career. As for my goals, I have not set my mind on something specific after I graduate, but with each day that I am here, I process a lot of what could be potentially areas of interest for a career.

What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?

What stood out to me was that the people and time here are two very different things back home. The people are willing to help you (I would get lost a lot and have troubles navigating the city) but I would be stopped by someone in the street or ask someone walking by for help and they would stop and make sure I was okay and give me directions, making sure I understood how to get back home. As for time, time is a mere concept of how one wants to use their time and energy to accomplish whatever it is that they have going on that day. Or in other words, time is not a clock at which you get up, leave, workout, and eat by, but how much time you spend enjoying your day, but its embracing friends and company, and most importantly taking the time to enjoy a meal with those that you care about. Trying to get things in on time has become a real task, but here my anxiety is minimal, no one is in a rush unless they are trying to flag down a bus, or running after their children while shopping. It is hard to explain how time flows here, one minute you look at the clock and five minutes goes by, the next two hours and nothing has changed.

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

My greatest anxiety was actually traveling by myself and being here the longest out of the people in the program when I started. Of course there is the whole language barrier, and the fact that half the time I am silent as I am processing so much, but yet trying to speak it all back has become somewhat of a task, but I try every day to do better than before.

#2: How are you Settling in

How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this work align with your professional goals that you set for yourself? Knowing the site as you do now, what would you like to be sure you achieve by the end of your internship?

Work has become a part of my daily life that I have based my new found routine, but it is still tricky to navigate the accents of the people. A lot of the time I am running around behind the residents and the doctors trying to understand the cases that we see, how use the Spanish from classes I have taken, and just plainly not trying to fall asleep after a long day. It is hard to make my way as it is first nature to the many of people I work with, but through the grit of it all, I have found some great people that are kind and willing to share with me their own lives outside the hospital. The work that I do is mainly grabbing supplies. I am growing more accustomed to the patients cases and what we will be doing with them, but others I am still getting used to their specific needs.

My professional goals are still yet to have a title, but I know that I am on the right path in finding out what it is that I want. It is funny when people here ask if I am a doctor or a med student, since that is the most common profession here due to the free education system that the country has for students. I just have grown accustomed to explaining that I'm majoring in public health back in the states and hope that they understand that it is more of a need for us than for them, since healthcare is so very different here. Here, no matter what your background is, your profession, job or no job, everyone gets some form of health care. For them this is a part of life, having the option to go to the hospital when you are sick and need the attention of a doctor is great, it is a privilege that many in the U.S don't have.

By the end of my journey here, and yes it is a journey as each day brings new and challenging obstacles, I want to say that I feel comfortable in my Spanish abilities, I want to

accomplish feeling like I pushed myself and I am stronger because of it, but mostly that I completed an internship that many would shy away from. It is not easy being here, you are stared at, people talk around you if you don't answer correctly and sometimes you feel as you are overlooked as an individual. However, there are some many small accomplishments that I have achieved while just sticking to the grind and showing people that I am interested, that I am learning from them, and just by showing up on time. Because of my coworkers I know that I chose a good fit for my life career in public health, it is just expanding what I have learned and applying it to a job that best fits my background and my values as an individual. Who knows I may end up working for the same company that gave me this internship?

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 will you do to ensure you are successful personally before you leave?

This week, I feel as if I have overcome a barrier of sorts. I feel more at ease in my position at the hospital, asking my teammates about cases, trying to understand in more depth which cases need more attention from the doctors and others that are close to being discharged. The feeling that I get when I walk into the break room, that when my coworkers smile and greet me with a kiss on the cheek as opposed to an air kiss, to me feels as I am a part of their team. I feel more at home knowing which department does what and how to approach certain doctors or staff in order to get a patient's information through fast enough to treat them. The dynamic of the hospital is like an ant colony, each worker has their own job and department to attend to, in order to keep the colony at bay and please the doctors, everyone must do their job and keep on task. However, there are sometimes when fooling around or taking a break to make a cup of mate is

needed, as it is a sign of respect to drink amongst your peers and share something with the group. I know that I have many weeks to go, but I feel as if I am starting to get the hang of things.

The improvements that I know that I need to make, are those that come with time, patience, and determination. Everything I do is based on the understanding of one thing, Spanish. This to some would come easier than others as a lot of the people in the program arrive with varying levels of language abilities, but to be able to sit down with the residents and get the gist of what is going on is progress to me. Speaking Spanish here is no easy task, it is not the Spanish itself that is the barrier, but the fact that the people here speak Castellano, a form of Italian Spanish with an accent all to their own. It makes a simple sentence seem difficult to understand. If I am able to mold my Spanish skills to the way the people speak here, than I know that I will have achieved some success, as well as, be able to be understood that much more by the people that I speak with. The other day when we were having lecture after class, we learned that those that speak without the accent are considered uneducated and therefore are already perceived as lower class citizens, but if you speak like the rest of the population than you are more or less accepted and therefore others are more inclined in discussing deeper topics with you. This happens a lot in the hospital, patients that come in are usually uneducated and therefore they speak differently and therefore the doctors speak slower, with less of an accent for them to then understand them more.

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

In addition to the culture of the hospital, the hospital itself is sometimes a difficult place to be, as many things there are what we would consider "not up to code" back in the U.S. Rooms

that I see patients in are all open, each room has about four beds and usually they are old and rusty. Surgery this week was a sight to see as I got to watch a patient get an artery re-routed from there peck, all the way down to the forearm with a rubber prosthetic tube. The procedure was sterile, however the room was far from. The door to the surgery room was opened and closed several times by others coming in and out of the room, but the patient himself was draped and was cleaned before the procedure started. It is just a different way that people get by down here, not everything is the latest and greatest, but they make it work. I think that by the time that I leave, I will have gained a greater appreciation of those that dedicate their lives in helping and saving others, no matter where they come from.

#3: Mid way check

Describe a day in your life?

This week, as I reflect on my life, I will give some insight to my life here and my day to day schedule (I know this should have been more of a first week journal entry, but I did not have a clear understanding of my place in the hospital at the time). In the mornings, depending on the area I will be working, I usually get up and run to the bus to meet my coworker at 7:30am. We take the morning trolley to the hospital, it is about a half hour ride, and is usually packed shoulder to shoulder. Once we arrive, we check in with our coordinator at the medical clinic where she is usually based for the day, depending on if she hears of anything exciting going on that day, we will follow her or one of the doctors to do rounds with the patients.

Today, we had the chance to work with an allergist, we called in the patient, asked them about some brief medical history and why they came to the clinic. Later, we took their blood pressure, and were taught how test patients using a spirometer. This experience had been the

most hands on that I have done with patients, but I feel like this is where I draw the line for helping out, I'm scared that the doctors are going to take this as a sign that I know more than I have experience with and will have to tell them yet again that I cannot take someone central line out, or give someone a shot.

After work, we go home to eat lunch and typical to the culture, we take two hours to rest (una siesta) to then get up later to go to Spanish class for three hours and go out the rest of the night exploring the city for good places to eat and watch tango in the streets. For me this is the best time to relax and give my brain a break. Processing the language and running around the hospital all day can be tiring, therefore I look forward to shutting my eyes and letting my brain rest. It is finally in the fifth week that I have adapted to the time change and gotten used to the different meal times that people are accustomed to here, but I still have trouble waking my stomach up in the morning as breakfast here is very light and usually consists of coffee or mate and a piece of bread.

Housing

My apartment and the family that I live with has been an experience in itself. Just recently, my host brothers have moved back to their moms house from vacationing with their father in the northern part of the country. I have had a difficult time adapting to their lifestyle as they are both in their teens and have no expectations from their mother as to cleaning or smoking inside the house. I realize I am in a different country, but when I was fifteen I was expected to be respectful of others, especially guests, but they seem to come and go when they want and do whatever they want, no restrictions. Machismo is a very real thing here, my host brothers are a

great example of that, but being a woman here has made me see what similarities we share back home and what privileges we have that many women here do not.

If I were back home talking to those that were being prepared to go on an internship like this, I would try not to over indulge in my own experience, as each person is unique just like their time in country will be. However, some advice I would give would be to understand the culture you are traveling to, this means not to get hung up on what the media writes about the country, but by walking around the city and getting to know the locals on the streets and in places of work. This has been the most beneficial part of my time here and I can say has given me the best memories by wandering the city with my closest friends from the hospital. If you are scared they will help you, if you want to see or experience something they will try and make it happen, all it takes is for you to speak up and try things out of your comfort zone.

Travel and Transportation

The last week of my time here I will be traveling to the north to a province called Chaco. There I will be staying with one of my best friends here and have been invited to her parents ranch to experience the gaucho life by riding her horse and eating the classic cuisine, asado! This would have never been possible if I didn't take the chance and speak up. It is very true to what they say here, if you don't talk to others, they will never know what your heart desires. For that I am grateful for all the people in the hospital that make things happen for me and help me experience all that I can in the time I have with them.

Finances

Budgeting is key, however I do not do it enough, especially for trips on the weekends outside the city. There is a 40% inflation on purchases in and around the country, so making sure that you have backup means of money is important. With the state of the country and the way that the banks operate here, it is not uncommon to see lines of 100 people for the ATMs. Over the past couple of weeks I have noticed an increase of people congregating, the worst time to go is around 8-9am, and again 2-5pm. It is a lot easier to bring American bills with you and go to a currency exchange (be careful where you go, some may seem sketchy since you have to walk down a dark hallway, but I only use the one that the program showed me so I know they are safe), however this is your best bet to getting money fast. Money goes here fast, food is hard to adapt to, more so for me since I have a problem with gluten so I tend to spend a lot more on food than everyone else. I have also gotten in the habit of going out to eat with others from the program since it is too hot to cook at home. Biggest advice is getting a large lunch and saving it to eat later for dinner. I did this by going to Pollo Rap, it is a grab and go open BBQ chicken place that serves large portions for cheap.

#4: Cultural Lens

Professional Learning

One of my most prized moments up there was this experience where watching a patient being catheterized and pointing out to a friend that was with me from the same program that the bag had no cap, thus would cause a hazard to not only the patient, but the surgeons working. She told me that I didn't know what I was talking about and continually told me that the doctors know what they are doing. However, once the patient started to urinate, my reservations about the cap were proved to be correct and the bag was indeed leaking on the floor. So I pointed it out

again to my friend and she quickly ran over to the doctors to show them the problem. After, I felt like I finally was able to do something that could have been a future accident prevented.

Personal Growth

As for the hospital this week and as an overview of my time spent here, I have found a lot of growth in myself and purpose for continuing my education, challenging myself yet again by getting my masters as a PA after undergrad. This experience has made me aware of what type of respect I will gain as a future PA student. The workplace culture here is all about your rank (years of study in your respected field) as well as, if you are in medicine or not. It is hard getting looked at as a doctor here when I fully know that if a crisis were to arise I would not be able to do anything for the patient. In a way this is motivation for me to continue school.

My host organization is really good about if you are feeling off, or do not understand some cultural boundaries that we, the students, are not familiar with. The lectures that we receive, helps to explain the system here, the education that the doctors receive, and why they do or do not do somethings that would be considered wrong in the U.S. Every day I look forward to now going straight up to surgery. This is where I would like to go towards as a PA, plus they have air conditioning up there so it is a bonus to not have to run around the hot hospital.

Cross Cultural Learning

The culture around the operation room is that if you are not the one in command, than you stay quiet, be thankful you get to watch and hopefully they let you back in. From the experience I said before, I thought I was in the wrong, thought that since I had no higher background in medicine that I was to be quiet and not say anything, however if I had stayed quiet

then it could have resulted that the patient could have gotten an infection from the exposed catheter, or someone could have fallen. However, I did speak up and was right about what I saw. This to me was the best day I have had so far, knowing that I didn't stick to the hierarchy of the OR and spoke up about it. Next time I will speak up from the start. I think that knowing that I have the potential to do more for others by continuing my education, in the future I can do more than observe, to be the one that catches the problem and can do more to help the patient. I have the capability of finding my purpose in life, it will be hard and there will be challenges along the way, but I have a new found confidence that I can do it.

#5 Reflections on Your Experience

Professional Encounters

With each surgery, in a weird way, I fall in love with medicine. To take someone from a poor state of health, to physically doing something to change the odds stacked against them, has been a great reward to watch. I am grateful for this experience. I have had my days of doubt, as to be expected, but I have found out that you can either dwell on those thoughts and allow them to bring you down, or just pack a bag and get lost in the mess and enjoy the journey. It has taken me a couple weeks to accept this, but I have learned you cannot force what is meant to be your future, if you do, you miss out on the possibilities that could one day give you the answers you seek. I have not yet had the chance to look further as to which program I would like to attend, but once I graduate and have the availability, that will be my next step.

Impressions of Host country

My impression of my host country has remained kind of the same throughout the time I was there. I felt like I was able to observe what I needed to see, be able to visit the places I

wanted to go, and met all the right people that made my time there worthwhile. There are general cultural things that stood out, like how every host mom is on some kind of diet, but they have no sense of actually working on getting healthier. Or how patients come in for smoking related problems, but the doctor that talks to them and tells them that it's poor for their health, is in fact doing the same!

Cross Cultural Encounters

The most frustrating aspect is food! People have a sense of poor nutrition ideas, but won't try anything different since food and specifically types of food like asado and pan are part of the cultural diet! However, everyone is hypertensive and has diabetes, but keeps eating like they don't, or don't take their medication, so they are recurring patients in the urgent care and it never gets through to them. The most rewarding aspect, is that Argentinians will drop everything for family in need! They are such a close-knit system of constant support that sometimes it's hard to get a word in edgewise. They love each other, support each other, and are always there for each other!

Your Culture Curve

The initial shock was actually setting foot on the plane from LAX to Santiago, Chile. I felt a rush of emotions around why and what was I thinking traveling so far from home for and internship that I could have just as easily done in the United States. I struggled the first 48 hours that I was there, not knowing what to do, or where to go! However, that subsided once I met the others from the program that were just as lost as I was. From there it peaked once the first group started to travel outside the city and going out for dinner together really helped us all come to

terms about being there. It helped us vent from each day at the hospital and classes, as well as giving us a small window of opportunity to speak English since almost none in Córdoba speaks English. After the first group left it started to go downhill, but for only about a week-week and a half. I mainly caught up on school work and watched the second season of the crown with my host mom. From there it went back up as the large group for February started trickling in. I felt excited that I could be a person that they could rely on for ideas of where to go, and what to see around the city. This was the time that I also was thriving in the hospital and had gotten to see some pretty cool surgeries in the OR.

As the weeks went on, around week 7 people started going back home, which reminded me that they were all so happy to go back and enjoy the things they missed and I had three more weeks at this point to stick it out and finish what I had started. It was hard, I was really trying to keep the momentum up and be engaging, but some days it was difficult to get out like I used to. Then once I reached the re-entry phase I was so ready to go home I wanted to cry. It was not because I didn't have a good time, but because I felt like I accomplished all that I could and saw what I wanted to see, and experienced what I needed to experience in order for me to continue my passion helping others.

Articulating your Experience

My time in Argentina was an experience that I can only tell from my point of view, with the knowledge I had, and from the memories I made. Traveling for some is not just mentally challenging, but physically challenging and at the end of the day you are your only responsibility so mentally checking in with myself helped tremendously. If someone were to ask me if I would do it all over again, and would change some things, I would say yes to doing it over again, but no

to changing anything as it was the experience that I needed to see in order for me to be where I am today. I have a new outlook on my life, a career path that I want to pursue, and it was all thanks to me taking myself outside my “box” and comfort zone and finding what it was that excited me and challenged me to be a better person. I will never be able to thank those that helped me through it all and allowed me the chances I got while I was down there, but because of them I am changed!

#6: Farewells

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

This is it, the finale of it all. My time has come to not just reflect on my last journal entry, but to document those that have helped me complete a successful internship and lasting memories while staying here in Cordoba. I think it only fair to compare the person I was when I interviewed for this internship, with the person that sits here taking it all in and have experienced all that she could have hoped for in just a short few months abroad. You truly never know what the future has in store for you, until you test your limits and overcome such obstacles. Because of this, I have gained a greater understanding of my place in this world by looking forward to my next challenge as a PA student. I have always had the desire to help others, but never quite knew what the title of such a career was called, until now.

My time in the operating room has shown me a newfound fascination for how the body and the mind can heal itself and go through great strife, to rebuild from a place of weakness. I have had the privilege of watching surgeons operate on the brain, bypass a heart, amputate a leg, and many more grueling complicated surgeries. They have taught me their craft, allowing me the time to look under their microscopes, let me lurk over their shoulders by standing on step stools

and raised platforms, and given me the time to explain the case and how they were going to approach the problem. This to me are priceless memories I will cherish, and for it, worth all the hard work it took to get here.

Advice for Future Interns

If I were talking to the future interns that are interested in doing an internship abroad I would tell them that by choosing an internship abroad they are one of the lucky few that through hard work, humbleness, and perseverance, will reap the riches that you get once you step foot on the airplane and land into the journey that gave me a whole new outlook on life. The way I see it is that I could have been perfectly happy with staying in my safe little box in the United States doing an internship back home. I may or may not have reached the place I feel that I am at today, with new goals and challenges that await me as I plan to further my education as a PA student focusing on surgery. However, I chose a different path, one that blew away the walls of the comfortable cultural box I lived in and challenged my mind, my heart, and my passion in helping others thousands of miles away. This experience has taught me that we are all capable of success. Some find success in the money that they earn, the challenging jobs they work, and even in the places they live, but over the time that I have spent abroad, the success that I feel most important is the connections I have made and the people that have touched my life, that I will forever be changed by. You don't have to speak the same language to understand someone's heart, but you do have to be open enough to allow yourself the capability, that through that person, your life is no longer just yours, but it belongs to those that you surround yourself with that make you better.