

Having saved up enough money, it was with some trepidation that I embarked on a 24 hour journey to a country I had never visited, with a language I didn't speak and a culture vastly different to my own, to work in temperatures of 38°C as a volunteer providing basic healthcare to some of the poorest people in the world. Spending my time observing all different aspects of the Indian healthcare system showed me how vastly different it is to the privatised Guernsey one. In the developing world, the doctors generally do not diagnose patients with illnesses, the patients will present their symptoms and the Doctor will prescribe medications to counteract the symptoms. It seemed a world away from the patient-based care of the NHS.

During my volunteering, I practiced a variety of skills such as taking blood pressure and pulse manually and testing patients' blood-glucose levels. There were many different outreach slum clinic programs that I attended, the main one being at the slum school. This slum clinic, was a basic brick and stone building with holes in an iron roof, it comprised of a small 'pharmacy', a female only doctor and a G.P. My time at the pharmacy was spent giving the patients the medication prescribed by the doctor and telling them in my very basic Hindi when they needed to take it. The medications used were very simple and were mostly over-the-counter drugs that fellow volunteers had donated. I got to see different basic medical procedures particularly whilst working with the female doctor such as IV cannulation and intramuscular injections. The doctor spoke English to an incredibly high standard and she taught me how to listen to the heart for irregular sounds.

Some of my time was spent in the children's 'hospital' which included three different wards, five private rooms and a neonatal unit housing 4 incubators for premature babies. Many of the children were in the hospital just for one day, being given fluids through an IV drip, dehydration being a huge problem in the local area. On the ground floor of the hospital was the doctor's office where during the mornings he ran a pediatric clinic. He would see anywhere from 50 to 100 children every morning and the clinic was constantly busy. Here I put my basic first aid skills to the test, helping the doctor to clean wounds amongst other things.



I was incredibly fortunate and humbled to be given the opportunity to witness a caesarian-section birth in a local gynecology clinic. The surgery was fascinating and a once in a lifetime experience I will always remember. This opportunity would not occur at my age in the UK and seeing such an amazing surgery reinforced why I wanted to be a doctor. It's fair to say that hygiene was not up to the standard of the U.K, but they tried their hardest to keep the room sterile without the use of modern technologies. This included removing your shoes when entering the operating theatre- something I found somewhat amusing!

The whole experience was life affirming. India is a land full of colour and contrast, it is lively, hot, dusty, wealthy and very poor. My experience confirmed not only the career I wish to pursue, but also showed me how cultures differ and how lucky we are to live in such an exciting and varied world.

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