

Reflection on My Experience in South Africa by Tori Edmiston
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My experience in Africa was nothing less than amazing. The people are extremely welcoming. They are happy with the little they have, they are extremely family oriented and colorful. I knew as soon as I arrived it was going to be a life-changing experience. I was greeted by the host family with open arms, presented with my room for the next couple months and thrown right into the family activities.



Family time!

The program and medical directors were spectacular and made me feel at home right away. My first day of medical experience was at a small clinic in an extremely rural area. I have to be honest, I was scared to get out of the car. When I arrived I was directed by a guard to the clinic, where I met the nurses (two nurses run the entire clinic). I could see immediately that there wasn't going to be much teaching going on- there was a line out the door of patients and the nurses were busy readying the clinic for the day. I realized immediately that I was going to have to be assertive and step outside of my comfort zone; that was one of the reasons I traveled to Africa wasn't it! I jumped right in and got involved. I could see the nurses were impressed and grateful, and in no time, I was directly involved in diagnosing and implementing treatment with the help of the nurses. This day- my first day- was one of my most memorable. I was amazed at how much the nurses were able to accomplish with so little and impressed with their interest in teaching me when

appropriate. I connected with the people right away, and even though communication verbally was difficult (most of them don't speak English) I could tell we understood each other.



Some of my favorite nurses at Blue Roof!

The rest of the medical experience was interesting and intriguing. I was pushed and challenged, put in positions I had never been in and wasn't sure I was able to handle. I took the same attitude of putting myself out there and really trying to get as much as I could out of every experience throughout my trip. I met some extremely intelligent and compassionate health care professionals that were able to give 5 star healthcare with minimal resources. As time went on, I grew more and more confident with my skills and my ability to help when necessary. I got to interact directly with families in their homes during medical home visits, which was extremely rewarding and eye opening. I got to see and assist in multiple surgeries, help deliver a baby, play with the kids in the pediatric unit, and even compassionately deliver very damaging news to patients. I watched doctors make clinic observations that medical professionals in the US need many tests to make. I left each clinic/hospital feeling inspired and awed.

Kids at the orphanage. So cute!



I made life long friends and really feel that I have become a better person because of my experience. The poverty and the challenges that people face there are intense and it is motivating to see the people thrive and succeed in such an environment. The knowledge and confidence I gained in the medical field is priceless, but what was even more amazing was the worldly knowledge and the general understanding of people that I gained. I will never forget my experience. I feel it has shaped me as a person and provided me with insight into the world and the medical field that is unique to other students in my position. I have benefited immensely from my trip in more ways than one and look forward to returning to South Africa as soon as possible.



Playing with the host kids!