

CFHI Report: Marci Lee

Introduction to Traditional Medicine and Communicable Diseases in Mumbai, India Programs

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My name is Marci Lee, I took part in the Traditional/Rural Healthcare program in Dehradun, India as well as the Communicable Diseases program in Mumbai. I would

like to thank CFHI and

the alumni first and

foremost for the

scholarship and second

for letting me partake in

this wonderful program.

Thank you.

I knew I was in India

when I walked out of the

doors, past the guard

with the humongous gun

and into the heat. We were only in Delhi for a couple of hours as our first rotations were

in Dehradun and Than Goan. After walking up and down flights of stairs in the train

station and a five-hour train ride with my first official cup of chai, we were in Dehradun.

We met Dr. Gandhi, the medical coordinator who gave us our schedules. After which we



were shipped of to the village of Than Goan.

The road to Than Goan is bumpy, rocky and has a lot of turns. I looked out the window at the beautiful foothills of the Himalayas and at the beautiful people of India that were herding cows and goats up the well traveled road. When we arrived at the clinical site, we were shown around by a nice man named Durinder who was also our yoga instructor. Our room was like a little blue cottage, we had three identical beds with mosquito nets and incense burning in the wall. After yoga that night, we had our first traditional Indian meal with dahl, rice, roti and many vegetables. I went to sleep to the sounds of crickets and frogs and the fresh mountain smell of Than Goan.

In the morning, we met Dr. Paul at his clinic down the trail from our room.

We had clinic from nine in the morning until one in the afternoon. That morning we saw several diverse patients, from coughs and colds, tropical fever and bicycle accidents. Dr. Paul is amazing because he travels from Dehradun every week to set up clinic up in Than Goan; he has a wonderful, understanding family. He helps over twelve villages in the area because on Tuesdays and Thursdays he packs up his pharmacy and medical team to different villages. We also went on an herbal walk on Friday and he showed us all of his ayurvedic medicines.

In the holy city of Rishikesh on the river Ganges we also learned about ayurveda and naturopathy. Here we woke up every morning at seven to partake in yoga which is a form of healing for Indians and now several westerners. After a complete natural breakfast of only sprouts we met with Dr. Murugan who taught us about naturopathy. The main idea of naturopathy is that all diseases have one cause which completely shattered my view of medicine. Yet I believe that this was important in my medical training, I

needed to see all sides of the story. We learned about all of the therapies including massage, diet, yoga, hydrotherapy, hot and cold therapy, exercise therapy and reflexology. We also learned ancient Indian philosophy with Yogi Prakash. The most interesting subject was karma. I will always carry these diverse ways of thinking in the back of my mind. They continued to permeate my thoughts in Dehradun.

Our clinical rotations in Dehradun were the complete opposite of Dr. Paul's clinic. In Dehradun, we rotated with the aforementioned Dr. Gandhi who is a



cardiologist, Dr. Gera who is a gynecologist, Dr. Prem Nath who is an acupuncture expert and Dr. Joshi who is another cardiologist. We got to know Dr. Gandhi's hospital exceedingly well

as we arrived and saw walk in patients and then went on rounds in his ICCU, ICU and recovery rooms. Dr. Gandhi truly challenged us with questions about the cardiovascular system, I became well acquainted with the stethoscope, and heart sounds. This was also the first time I was able to read a normal and an abnormal EKG.

Dr. Gera was wonderful and on our first day there, we were able to see a live birth. I felt like I did my part when I handed the woman a glass of water. In our time with Dr. Gera, we were able to see the live birth of twins, multiple cesarean sections, an accidental hemorrhage, tubal ligations and insertions of intrauterine devices and other birth control methods.

The living room of Dr. Prem Nath was lit solely by the Indian sunlight. We sat around his dining room table as he taught us about acupressure. He is about ninety-five years old and his intelligence surpasses everyone I know. The first day we learned about the channels of the body, flow and how the organs interact with different pressure points and overall health. He also taught us the Hindi language and some words of respect which we used throughout our time in India. I will never forget Dr. Prem Nath and what he has taught me. The current information I learned from the second cardiologist was also exceedingly important.

With Dr. Joshi I was able to see my first echocardiogram (echo). In the ICCU where he rounds every morning from ten to eleven in the morning, he has a special echo room. The first afternoon I saw three echo's and two of them had mitral valve regurgitation which I identified by myself. Dr. Joshi's clinical office was a small five by ten foot room that always had at least ten patients with their whole immediate families in it. Dr. Joshi would quiz me every day with EKG's, echoes and x-rays and by the time our two weeks were over I felt like I could be a cardiologist. By our fifth week in Dehradun we were feeling melancholy because we were leaving all of the wonderful relationships we had built. However several adventures awaited us in Mumbai.

Mumbai

In Mumbai, the rotations were a world's difference away from Dehradun. With a population of over thirteen million people comes a complex medical system. A typical day in Mumbai started at 7:30am when we were served breakfast at the apartment, then we were off in an auto rickshaw to the railway station. Here we rode the train for a couple of stops and

found Dr.

Bhatki's clinic.

Then we went

back to the

apartment, found

some lunch and

relaxed, had an

early dinner and

we were off to the

train station



again. This time we went all the way across the city to Dr. Mehta's clinic. Dr. Mehta has a family practice in a part of Mumbai called Sewri. Needless to say, we were exhausted every night.

Dr. Bhatki took us to the leprosy hospital where we took a tour and viewed a surgery. Even though these patients have been stigmatized by their families they are still smiling and helping around the hospital. These patients have actually been thrown out by their husbands and wives because of a curable disease. We saw the most painful looking

claw hands, ulcers and foot drop. We were fortunate enough to see a claw hand plastic surgery as the election results for the next president of the United States were being released. The rehabilitative procedures and surgeries here help all of the leprosy patients of Mumbai carry out hope that they can return to a normal life.

We also went to the BSES government hospital for a couple of weeks as well as Dr. Bathla's clinic. Here we stayed from nine o'clock to four o'clock watching surgeries and observing the outpatient clinics. We observed Dr. Mehta's surgeries, which were in the field of oncology. In order to view a surgery in the BSES hospital we had to remove

our shoes, change into a completely different set of scrubs, put on blue clogs and a disposable mask and hair net. We were able to see two mastectomies, a bone graft, the closure of a colostomy, cleft palate surgery and several others in their three operating theaters. After the



surgeries were over Dr. Mehta would give us the medical history of the patient and answer any questions we had.

In Dr. Bathla's night clinic we were able to see an eighty year old woman have surgery on her ear. Wedding jewelry in India is exceedingly important to women. Therefore when this woman's earrings ripped right through her ear, she went to Dr. Bathla to sew them right up and re-pierce them in a week's time. She had a local

anesthetic and about ten stitches in each ear just so she could wear earrings again. It was interesting to see the traditions carried out with such force in India.

India was a country I had grown to love. I took a deep breath in of the hot air that smelled of spices, gas fumes and of the millions of inhabitants of the city. I heard the last horns of the cars and took a look around at what I considered to be my neighborhood, my home for five weeks. I was reluctant to say my last namaste to the customs officer because I fell in love with the healthcare system and furthermore the country of India.

I am thankful for everything that I have learned in India and the relationships with the doctors, patients and people I met. The differences in the healthcare systems of the United States and India are vast, yet similar. Doctors, nurses and medical assistants, no matter where they are, want to help and heal their patients. This is the common ground of medicine throughout the world and a lesson I will never forget.