

Child Family Health International

Scholarship Recipients' Report

My name is Alexandra Borders and I attended the Maternal Child Health Program in Pune, India from December 2010 into January 2011. I am currently in Nursing School and will graduate in May 2011 as a Registered Nurse. I look forward to continuing my nursing education, after working for a few years as an R.N., as a Nurse Practitioner or Midwife.

Receiving the scholarship from CFHI helped make the program doable for me. As a student, finances are tight and travelling to India was an expensive proposition. Yet the CFHI program seemed to offer an experience I was reluctant to pass up. The additional assistance from the scholarship helped me figure out how to make this opportunity a reality.



Healthcare workers by vocation take care of other people and do their best to make them healthy. Providing those skills to help facilities and caregivers in developing countries in a volunteer or service capacity is at the root of the healthcare profession and it served as a reconnection to and reminder of my passion of medicine and medical care. I am confident that I gained as much from the experience as those I intended to help.



Service, I feel, is an integral part of healthcare education. I find that often the idea of healthcare has come to be synonymous with medical care and there is sometimes a “we know best” mentality that accompanies the educational training of medical professionals. True healthcare must be holistic care. Individuals cannot be fully healthy without focusing on the care of their mind, body and spirit. Medical knowledge certainly is necessary and it serves as the backbone of healthcare but without a larger understanding of community and basic cultural values, medical knowledge alone can be ineffective or, at the very least, incomplete. It is for this reason that I feel it is important for future healthcare workers to travel, and experience with open eyes and

open hearts, the world and immerse themselves in another culture. It is was in the hope of experiencing that for myself that I packed my bags and travelled to India, alone.



It is easy to become complacent in our own culture, in our own community, in the world we create for ourselves. I know that I often find myself caught up in my own life, my studies, my world, my needs. The exposure to another culture, vastly different than my own, and being placed in an unfamiliar and even uncomfortable place transformed my perspectives on medical treatments and also on life. It was incredible to see what is done with so few resources. The quality of care and the training of medical professionals vastly exceeded my expectations and certainly made me question the validity, or at least absoluteness, of our own American medical training. It served as a valuable reminder that we don't always know what is best and we should always be open to learning new ways of thinking and new ways of doing. Making the most out of the resources that are available and not wasting supplies is an ability that I think most western medical practices could do well to learn from. We are often so wasteful and yet not necessarily providing better care. I think gaining enhanced cultural understanding in a particular environment provided me with the ability to look at all patients in a new light, with a new

perspective, and better understand them as individual people. I hope that this realization remains with me throughout my career and practice.



My career goal is to continue my education and become a midwife or nurse practitioner. I plan to live and work in a rural community providing care to those with limited access to healthcare.

CFHI's program offered exposure to the treatment of women, pregnant women, infants and children where resources are often limited. Being immersed in that care and culture, as both a participant and observer, will undoubtedly remain with me as my education and practice continues.



I have been fortunate in my life and have traveled extensively. I enjoy the introspection that comes with travelling alone and I am endlessly fascinated by other cultural practices and norms. Yet each experience I have had has left me as an observer on the outside of the culture. While in past travels I have gained a more open perspective, I have never been immersed in another culture. CFHI provided me with a true cultural immersion. Being immersed in a community through healthcare, particularly as children are born and families are started, offers a unique and deep perspective on the culture. The Maternal and Child Health Program in Pune, India merged my passions in a comprehensive program that was tremendously beneficial to both my personal and professional development. I hope that this unbelievable experience will serve as a solid base for a long future of international volunteer medical programs throughout my career as a nurse.