

CFHI Global Health Education Program
Andean Health in Quito, Ecuador
By Vichy Lin, CFHI Participant, June 2011

I am Vichy Lin and I participated in CFHI's Andean Health program in June 2011. I felt so fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to another country and meet people from different backgrounds. For a girl who had never left her hometown, this program was the chance of a lifetime.



On weekday mornings I went to clinic. After clinic, I explored the city of Quito. I also spent many afternoons at home with my host family, which allowed me to experience the local culture.



This program has shown me the importance of the physician-patient relationship. Getting to know the patient allows one to see the variety of causes that contribute to his or her health or lack of it. I see myself as a holistic healthcare worker. The service we as healthcare workers are supposed to provide is one that considers all the aspects of a person's health—the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of each patient.

In Ecuador, time is something that is very precious. A doctor can have anywhere from 3-4 patients a day to more than 20 patients all within the same time limits. Therefore, it is a challenge for the physician to see every patient and give each the attention they need.

Ecuador is a highly religious country, with the majority of the population being Catholic. Many women do not use birth control, abortion is seen as a crime and a betrayal to your boyfriend or husband, and there is little or no sex education. Teen pregnancy is a problem. It



was not uncommon for me to see a fourteen year old in the labor room.

Ecuador is unique in that the population is plagued by health issues of first and third world countries. The population faces poverty and malnutrition, hypertension, and diabetes. Many people cannot afford food, decent shelter, or clean water. Pollution is also a huge problem.

It is not uncommon to see four generations living together under one roof. Everyone has a place, and everyone pitches in. Many people that I encountered had lived their whole lives in Quito and though they traveled, they still preferred Quito. Everyone always spoke of how diverse and beautiful their lands were and all the things they could do.



I learned that the government provides free healthcare to the population. I saw it as a society that focused on family. They focused on educating everyone, all the way to the possibility of a PHD without the need to pay.

This program was my first real experience working within a clinical setting. It was great to see doctors, interns, nurses, and other healthcare professionals working together to achieve the same common goal. This experience has strengthened my desire to work with underserved populations both domestically and internationally.



