Leadership in the Community:
Clinical Immersion to El Salvador

Allie Miller, SN; Courtney Walin, SN; Eva Riedesel, SN; Haley House, SN; Kaitlyn Tinge, SN; Karen Nakano SN; Kelly Peterson, SN; Leah Rofzen SN; Jill Fernandes PhD, RN
College of Nursing and Health Sciences, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

INTRODUCTION
During a community health clinical in San Salvador, El Salvador a group of undergraduate nursing students conducted care at:
- Casa Esperanza [Hope House]
- Suchitoto
- Eco clinic
- Unicentro
- Nahualapa

PURPOSE
The cultural immersion experience in El Salvador is meant to change how nursing students advocate for patients, families, and communities. Our goal was to make an impact in the community. To do this, we learned the country’s history and values through various experiences in order to develop cultural competence.

CASASPERANZA
Soup Kitchen
32% of the population is at or below the poverty line
- Lack of support networks for homeless population leads to isolation and loneliness
- Dangerous and violent area due to increased gang disputes
Experiences Include:
- Prepared and served meals
- Therapeutically communicated with the clients
- Provided clinical consults
- Distributed basic medications and functional aids (glasses)

SUICHITOTO
Sembrando Esperanza (Farming Hope)
- A community garden tended voluntarily by children from Casa Concordia, the orphanage, and adults from Casa Esperanza
- The food grown is used to feed the people at the orphanage and the soup kitchen
- From the hibiscus and axolotl, they produce shampoo, wine, and sea salt; profits are used to support Casa Concordia and Casa Esperanza
- This experience is meant to teach transferable life skills and promote self-sufficiency
Experiences Include:
- Weeded the garden
- Planted various vegetables
- Talked about hydroponics

ECOCLINIC
Home-health Clinic
- There is supposed to be a doctor, a nurse, and a secretary at each Eco clinic
- This one only had a doctor and a nurse who were responsible for 700 families
- They triage families based on health risk:
  - Green: little risk; one visit/year
  - Yellow: some risk; visited every 3-4 months
  - Red: chronic illness/disability; visited every week
Experiences Include:
- Shadowed the health professionals on their home visits

UNICENTRO
Breast Feeding Clinic
- Illegal to formula feed infants under 6 months
- Women donate breast milk while waiting for their check-up
- Donated breast milk can help save the lives of premature infants
- Premature births: 12.8/100 in 2010
- Infant mortality rate: 20/100,000 in 2013
Experiences Include:
- Learned and participated in the process of collecting breast milk

NAHUALAPA
Health Teaching
Teaching topics requested by the population with each clinical group:
- Sexual health, pregnancy prevention, hypertension, and diabetes
- High rates of STD’s due to the lack of education regarding safe sex practices
- Number of people living with HIV: 21,000
- High rates of teen pregnancy due to amount of violence against women and cultural stigma against women being knowledgeable about safe sex practices
- Hypertension and diabetes rank in the top 20 causes of death in El Salvador
Experiences Include:
- Attended a church service
- Performed skits as part of the health teaching
- Provided resources and advice related to cultural lifestyle habits
- Provided rosaries for some of the adults and necessities for the children (toothbrush, toothpaste, condoms)

EL ROSARIO
Clinic: First Level of Attention
- Similar to clinics in the United States
- Given a referral as needed
- One exam room for each type of care: vaccines, consults, and procedures
Vaccines are mandatory in El Salvador
- Families keep record of vaccines in a paper book
Experiences Include:
- Provided basic nursing skills
- Provided health education in the waiting area
- Observed clinic visits and procedures

ROSALESHOSPITAL
Public Hospital: Second Level of Attention
- Poor patient to nurse ratio
- Long hospital wait time
- Lots of gang violence victims in the hospital
- Gang dynamics affect function of healthcare team
- General lack of supplies
Experiences Include:
- Gave hand and foot massages to patients
- Observed medical care
- Participated in some procedures (wound dressing changes)

BENJAMIN BLOOM
Pediatric Hospital
- Only pediatric hospital in Central America
- Burns from fireworks are very common among children in El Salvador due to lack of proper precautions
- 44 people were burned in the weeks leading up to Christmas in 2012
Experiences Include:
- Provided moral support for children and parents through therapeutic communication
- Donated toys (stuffed animals and dolls/action figures) to hospitalized children
- Toured the hospital
- Visited the in-hospital school room
- Encouraged respiratory hygiene by distributing bubbles and encouraging use

OUTCOMES MET
- Examined the impact of culture, socioeconomic factors, health behaviors, and physical environments on the health and safety of communities
- Used evidence-based practices when implementing health teaching, health counseling, and screening
- Used basic epidemiological methods to assess and analyze the health of communities
- Developed a community-based care plan to address high-risk pregnancy and neonatal health