

Maternity and Perinatal Health in Brazil: Understanding the Struggles that Women and Children Face when Diagnosed with Chronic/Infectious Diseases

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Funded by CHW under the Global Health Fellows program

Introduction

- IFF/Fiocruz is a teaching hospital that provides care for women and children who are diagnosed with serious conditions
- IFF aims to give women, children, and their families a comprehensive health care treatment plan that incorporates knowledge from a multi-disciplinary team

Objective of Internship

I wanted to increase my exposure to global healthcare systems especially those with a universal health care system; I also wanted to pursue my passion of working closely with women and children in the health care field.

Work profile

- Shadowed professional gynecologists, pediatricians, psychologists throughout the day
- Played with children staying in different outpatient units
- Attended meetings with multidisciplinary teams involved in the care of women and children

Reflection

- I shadowed doctors/residents in four large units of the hospital that work together to provide a multi-disciplinary treatment plan for their patients:
 - Psychological Services,
 - Gynecology/Obstetrics,
 - Health and Play,
 - Home Assistance Program
- At the end of each week, I wrote a critical reflection describing what I learned in each department of the hospital



Photo taken in Pre-natal Unit in IFF with gynecologist 1st year and 2nd year residents. Joan Perez is third from the left. Photo by receptionist at Pre-natal.

- From listening to the mother's moving stories and their struggle of having a high-risk pregnancy or caring for a child with a serious and debilitating condition, I began to understand the sociocultural and structural barriers that are present for mothers in this position in Brazil under a universal public healthcare system



Photo taken in Infectious Disease Unit at IFF with the Health and Play team. Joan Perez is on the far right standing with Brazilian medical students in Health and Play.

- From examining ultrasounds alongside talented residents and doctors to finding a fetal heartbeat and playing with children, this internship was filled with education experiences and exciting moments
- I learned about the importance of compassion, empathy, and patience when working in the medical field especially in pediatrics and maternal medicine
- Every day, I observed variety of activities such as: out-patient intakes in pre-natal, fetal biopsies/ultrasounds, at-home vital check in, and more

Looking ahead

- Prior to this internship, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do as a physician; now, I can see myself specializing in family medicine and promoting and innovating new health solutions for women, children, and adolescents in Latin America.

Questions

How accessible is it for pregnant women to receive mental health care services in Brazil? How do religious beliefs influence a mother's thoughts on pregnancy? How does the environment of a hospital affect a child's development?

Conclusion

- Working in a global health environment is a life-altering and rewarding experience that allows for an exchange of knowledge which can help communities and countries towards a healthier and more equitable healthcare system.

Acknowledgements

I am so grateful and thankful to the CHW for supporting and funding this internship, my advisor Paula Gaudenzi for her guidance throughout my time in Brazil, and all the doctors and students I met in IFF that took the time to tell me their stories and passions.