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

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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.

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
- 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.

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