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Global Health Experience: Laos Friends Hospital for Children

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Global Health Experience: Laos

Laos Friends Hospital for Children



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Background on Laos



- Located in the Mekong River region of SE Asia
- Population: 7 million
- Languages: Lao, French
- Religion: Buddhism

- One of the world's few remaining communist states
- Approx. 64 in 1000 Lao children die before age 5
- Deaths commonly due to malnutrition, malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, beriberi

Objectives

- Challenge my medical, interpersonal, and teaching abilities in a resource-limited setting where English is not the primary language
- Immerse myself in the culture of Laos; gain an understanding of their history and way of life
- Become a more effective physician, educator, and steward of resources for my future international medical practice



Preparation

- Teaching by LFHC medical director via Skype
- WHO Pocketbook of Hospital Care for Children
- *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures* by Anne Fadiman
- Global Health Track

Experience

- Laos Friends Hospital for Children
 - Opened in 2015, intent to establish a locally-sustainable hospital, run by and for the Lao people
 - Treats more than 20,000 children annually
 - Equipped with: Outpatient Dept, Inpatient ward, NICU, Emergency Dept, Laboratory, Pharmacy, Operating Theater, Thalassemia clinic, and Development clinic
 - International volunteers educate and train local staff
- My clinical experience
 - Day and night shifts in ED, inpatient ward, NICU
 - Provided clinical supervision and teaching to Laotian staff, particularly new Lao physicians
 - Managed critically ill patients with limited resources



Reflection

- Adapted diagnostic and treatment decision-making based on available resources
- Refined physical exam skills
- Forced clinical decision making without diagnostic laboratory/radiologic studies and with minimal therapeutic resources
- Further developed personal teaching style in this opportunity to transition from learner to teacher

Future Directions

- Seek out ICU fellowship that formally incorporates global health training or will individualize training to include global health education
- Return to LFHC, and consider performing quality improvement or research projects there

