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San Pedro Hospital - San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala

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San Pedro Hospital – San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala

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Background

Why I choose this elective

- Experience in different cultures and healthcare systems helps better care for patients from diverse backgrounds.
- To learn about important global health issues - infant/child health, women's health, maternal and neonatal mortality, preventive care.
- To advance my Spanish proficiency.

San Pedro, Guatemala

- One of the towns surrounding Lake Atitlán, inhabited primarily by the Tz'utujil Mayan.

Objective

- My primary objective was to learn about the healthcare system of Guatemala including the challenges and strengths.

Preparation

- Global Health track education provided the knowledge for navigating global health experiences.
- Guatemala Healthcare Assessment provided overview of Guatemalan healthcare.

Experience



Clinical practice – I worked with a local general physician. Patient encounters included acute illnesses, chronic conditions, traveler's illnesses, emergencies, pre-op evals, and deliveries.



Spanish education & Cultural Immersion – Through Community Spanish School I did Spanish language classes, participated in cultural activities, learned about traditional medicine, and stayed with a local family in San Pedro.

Reflection

Guatemalan Healthcare System

- Access to care, cost, health education, transportation, health perceptions all impact healthcare.
- Only one public hospital for the Lake Atitlán region.
- Private hospitals can be cost prohibitive.
- The Guatemalan civil war has had lasting impacts.



Traditional Medicine

- Traditional medicine plays a role in patient care and patient health related beliefs.
- Over 70% of infants are delivered at home with a traditional midwife.
- Providing effective healthcare requires understanding of traditional beliefs and customs.



Future Directions

- I would love to continue to incorporate global health into my career, both abroad and locally.
- I hope to continue to advance my Spanish.