A Pediatric Education Abroad Rotation in Cape Town, South Africa.

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International nursing education abroad rotations provide students with opportunities to gain clinical skills and content area knowledge while simultaneously being immersed in a new culture. This program allowed students to have an education abroad experience during the August, 2016. Six students who were scheduled to graduate in December, 2016 participated in the two week pediatric-focused education abroad experience in Cape Town, South Africa. They were seeking to improve their clinical skills, experience another culture, develop cultural sensitivity, make a difference and enhance their job prospects. In addition to a variety of cultural experiences, the program focused on caring for children in hospital and community settings. Students were able to have a clinical experience in a pediatric outpatient clinic, a private hospital and a public, specialty care hospital. Students completed 50 clinical hours in South Africa. In addition to the clinical experiences, students conducted a health fair at a local preschool where they taught the children handwashing, oral hygiene and ways to prevent the spread of colds and flu. They also attended healthcare related presentations led by local South African health officials to learn about the health issues most prevalent and pressing in South Africa. After returning to the United States, the students spoke of initially being overwhelmed with the new location and culture, having guilt feelings about being confronted with such stark poverty, wondering whether or not they made a difference, and having feelings of gratitude at being allowed to participate in such an experience and to work with such welcoming health care workers and families. This education abroad experience allowed students to be able to compare and contrast pediatric health care between the United States and South Africa. The clinical experience also allowed the students to learn to work collaboratively with other health professionals in an international, intercultural setting with the mutual goal of the pediatric patient in mind.
Abstract
This unique short-term education abroad experience allowed nursing students to participate in an international pediatric clinical rotation.

International nursing education abroad rotations provide students with opportunities to gain clinical skills and content area knowledge while simultaneously being immersed in a new culture.

The Experience
This program allowed students to have an education abroad experience during the August, 2016. Six students who were scheduled to graduate in December, 2016 participated in the two week pediatric-focused education abroad experience in Cape Town, South Africa.

The students were seeking to improve their clinical skills, experience another culture, develop cultural sensitivity, make a difference and enhance their job prospects. In addition to a variety of cultural experiences, the program focused on caring for children in hospital and community settings.

Students were able to have a clinical experience in a pediatric outpatient clinic, a private hospital and a public, specialty care hospital. Students completed 50 clinical hours in South Africa.

In addition to the clinical experiences, students conducted a health fair at a local preschool where they taught the children handwashing, oral hygiene and ways to prevent the spread of colds and flu.

They also attended healthcare related presentations led by local South African health officials to learn about the health issues most prevalent and pressing in South Africa.

The Clinicals
The clinical experiences took place in three settings: an public outpatient clinic; a pediatric specialty orthopedic hospital; and in a private hospital.

This clinical rotation allowed students to see conditions rarely seen in the United States such as mumps and tuberculosis of the bone.

Students were able to work collaboratively with a variety of other health professionals in an international setting.

Students were able to experience a different health care delivery system and compare and contrast the United States’ health care system with the health care system of a developing country.

Student Experience
After returning to the United States, the students spoke of initially being overwhelmed, having guilt feelings about being confronted with such stark poverty, and wondering whether or not they made a difference. They commented on having feelings of gratitude at being allowed to participate in such an experience and to work with such welcoming health care workers and families.

• “I see how nurses work in America vs. how they work in South Africa with the limited resources they have there and am thankful for what we have in America.”

• “I learned that we are very privileged in the United States. Many of the things I have day to day I did not have in South Africa particularly in relation to technology. These struggles made my day to day experiences a bit harder but I learned to work around them.”

Significance
This education abroad experience allowed students to be able to compare and contrast pediatric health care between the United States and South Africa.

The clinical experience also allowed the students to learn to work collaboratively with other health professionals in an international, intercultural setting with the mutual goal of the pediatric patient in mind.

Short term study abroad experiences allow students to experience another culture firsthand and to develop cultural competence that will enhance their clinical practice in a diverse setting such as the US.