

University of Iowa India Winterim 2013-14
Section 006: Health and Rehabilitation Medicine
Selected student comments from their final paper.

Quite frankly, the experiences I have had here are priceless. The group of people I have gotten to know in this process—both the students and staff on the trip and the outstanding PT staff and specialists we worked with—have given me resources and connections that I will utilize and keep in contact with for the remainder of my medical career. Thank you, Professors Yack and Singh; this experience has truly changed my life. AH

Overall, my experience in India has been amazing, completely life-changing. One thing I really appreciated was the firsthand observing and learning in the hospital. We spend years and years reading textbooks, looking at some pictures, and listening to a professor lecture but seeing patients with diseases/ traumas first hand really helps us put what we have learned in perspective. Meenakshi Mission Hospital did a fantastic job accommodating and teaching us. ... Taking Health and Rehabilitation Medicine and traveling to India was the best and most rewarding decision of my life thus far. The knowledge I have gained from Meenakshi Hospital staff and the memories I have shared with my new University of Iowa friends made this experience absolutely worthwhile! SK

Of all the amazing things we got to do, the visit to the orphanage meant the most to me. I had gone expecting to see a bunch of kids, but I think the residents we did see had a much greater impact. The one thing that stuck in my head was that all of these women had been abandoned by their family for one reason or another, but they were still so happy. I have been blessed with too many things to count, but their happiness overwhelms mine. When I return home, this is the one thing I will remember most... Love life for what it is, and never take anything for granted. AB

My stay in India has been an amazing experience, and the opportunities I was given while I was here will be impact hugely on how I approach my future and my education. BB

Driving through the countryside, I fought back the urge to sleep simply because I enjoyed seeing the Indian people interact with each other. The multitude of smiles, arms around friends, and hands being held showed me that it's easy to be happy. It doesn't take fancy cars, smartphones, or sidewalks. It just takes good people who appreciate the chance to be alive with the people they love. BW

The interaction with the physical therapists and even the few doctors we spoke to was unlike anything in the United States. Particularly with the PTs, it was clear that we were a priority and every day, they went out of their way to answer our questions. One of our earliest visits was to the cleft lip and palate ward. Having been born with a cleft lip and palate, seeing the post-op patients alongside their pre-op pictures was moving. Dr. Panchavarnam and the Smile Train have completed

over 8100 successful surgeries in their ten years of operation. The opportunity to watch him in the operating room is something I will treasure my entire life. EC

Everywhere we went we were smiled upon, given flowers and free food, blessed, accepted, befriended, and loved. I have never felt so embraced and welcomed within any culture as much as that of the people of India. IG

There are so many experiences from MMHRC and India in general that I will value and appreciate forever. It was incredibly fortunate to have been able to learn from such astounding and caring medical professionals. I always felt that the doctors and staff I worked with truly cared whether we understood and appreciated that we were there. I have learned so much from this amazing experience both medically and culturally. I've made so many precious memories that I am immensely grateful to cherish for the rest of my life. JK

There are many differences between America and India but there aren't so many differences between Americans and Indians. Having felt, experienced, and seen all the similarities of the people first hand I feel more encouraged and positively about my future as a physical therapist. KT

Taking this class helped me to honor my grandmother's memory. Going through the hospital and talking to different doctors and patients, learning about the culture and my heritage as well as the healthcare of India was extremely rewarding. In addition it was truly amazing to see the great work that MMHRC does for the community. KS

I felt that I learned a lot from the doctors at MMHRC and felt the presentations and the daily preparation for each specialty was essential to my educational experience. This trip has renewed my desire to learn. The knowledge of the doctors and the way they challenged us with questions has made me feel inspired to go home and continue my education in hopes to join the medical field. Beyond this India has expanded my worldview. It has affirmed to me that the smile is universal. I believe that this experience will develop my ability to communicate across language and cultural barriers. MF

Additionally, my Indian experiences with the hospital staff, patients, and general population has reminded me of the importance of humility, patience, gratitude, kindness, and compassion. It is my mission to carry out my role in the healthcare field and in everyday life keeping these qualities at the forefront of my education, practice, and encounters with others. Ultimately, these past three weeks have broadened my perspective of the world and enriched my life in countless ways. It is my hope that I can apply this new worldly perspective to the betterment of healthcare in America and wherever life takes me. PN

These last three weeks in India have been more than I could have ever imagined it

to be. As the three weeks progressed I finally started to understand what the staff member meant by “the greatest opportunity you have is to do more.” Meenakshi Mission Hospital is an exemplifying example of this statement. The staff here does “more” each and every day whether they are trying to see more patients a day, perform more life changing surgeries, or providing free care and food to patients who can’t afford it. SW

It’s amazing to think that I share a benign heart abnormality with two men in rural India. Mine’s been called “musical” by my doctors. What a romantic notion. Maybe our hearts sing the same song. God is good and so is India. TK

Looking beyond career aspirations to life aspirations, India has inspired me. How can I not strive to be more generous after being offered an apple from a resident at the orphanage? In short, I could not be more grateful for this opportunity. In three weeks I have experienced more than I ever would as a hospital volunteer in the U.S., and more importantly, I learned valuable lessons in generosity, patience, and humility. WB