

Global Health Experience for Students and Volunteers

Introduction

Clínica de Familia La Romana's global health experience provides learning opportunities for volunteers, students, residents, and fellows. In addition to clinical and programmatic rotations, all students and volunteers also participate in a research or public health project at Clínica de Familia.

The global health experience at Clínica de Familia La Romana evolved from collaboration between Clínica de Familia and Columbia University's Program for Population and Global Health (previously the IFAP Global Health Program).

Clínica de Familia La Romana initially started receiving students from Columbia University in 2002, but over the last decade and a half, the program has expanded substantially and we now receive students and volunteers from several different Dominican, American, and other foreign universities and institutions.



Clínica de Familia La Romana

Clínica de Familia provides comprehensive primary and HIV-specialized outpatient medical care, community and home-based services, and an annual summer camp for HIV-positive children. Clinical services offered include primary care, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, cardiology, diabetes care, laboratory, family planning, mental health services, and diagnostic imaging

services to the general public. In addition to its general clinical services, Clínica de Familia also houses one of the largest HIV clinics in the country, providing medical care and treatment to nearly 2000 clients.

The clinic also offers prenatal and reproductive health care for adolescents through the Maternal-Infant Health Annex, and STI clinics for sex workers and men who have sex with men.

Moreover, the clinic oversees a program for the reduction of vertical transmission

of HIV. Clínica de Familia aims to improve the quality of life of the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the eastern part of the country with a holistic, family-centered approach. More information on each program can be found at www.clinicadefamilia.org.do.



Global Health Experience Overview

The global health experience provides education and training rotations, internships, and practicums for medical, public health, nursing, social work and other health science students, residents, post-graduate fellows, and volunteers. The goal of the program is to improve the health of underserved populations through the involvement of global health students and professionals engaged in research, education and service.



Program Objectives

The program aims to ensure that all participants have a valuable experience that helps them to understand the challenges that clients and providers face in a developing country while learning about the treatment of HIV and reproductive health care. Students and volunteers who participate in the global health experience should complete the program with the following objectives met:

- Increased cultural competency and understanding of the practice of medicine and public health in resource poor settings.
- Increased knowledge of HIV care and treatment, sexually transmitted infection diagnosis and treatment, HIV vertical transmission, family planning, and adolescent reproductive health.
- Improved care for vulnerable populations in the eastern Dominican Republic, accomplished through a project of public health, clinical, or research importance at Clínica de Familia La Romana.
- Increased understanding of Dominican and Latino immigration in the United States and improved health care provision through exposure to Dominican and Haitian culture and Spanish language immersion.

Program Structure

All participants work on research and/or service projects and engage in education and training. They receive a pre-departure orientation that includes relevant documentation, reference articles and project definition, in order to ready participants for travel and work. Upon arrival in the Dominican Republic, they receive an orientation that includes information about the area, language, culture and safety, in addition to a tour of Clínica de Familia and introductions to staff. After completing the orientation, participants begin project work and also participate in continuing education sessions. Based on the topic of the project, students are assigned a supervisor with whom they develop their scope of work. In addition to the deliverable, participants provide a final presentation of their project to relevant staff. Students are able to give and receive weekly feedback from their staff supervisor and the clinic's Student and Volunteer Coordinator. Participants receive guidance and orientation to structure their schedule combining both clinic



needs and participant interests. Students are encouraged to engage in Spanish language classes and cultural activities. Further explanation of some of these components is found in the paragraphs below.

Clinical and Programmatic Rotations and Project Work

For medical students and practitioners, the global health experience includes a clinical component, allowing students to shadow clinicians providing care to children and adults at Clínica de Familia La Romana and adolescents at the Maternal-Infant Health Annex. Visits, and in some cases, clinical rotations, are also organized with Hospital Francisco Gonzalvo (large public provincial hospital with which Clínica de Familia works closely) and Centro Médico Central Romana (a private hospital owned by the sugarcane company), among others. International students and volunteers can also have opportunities to interact with Dominican students, interns and medical professionals as well as tour regional clinics and Dominican universities, in order to become familiar with the Dominican systems of public health and education.



The global health experience at Clínica de Familia allows participants to observe and learn from clinic providers in the areas of HIV care, pediatrics and obstetrics and gynecology; observe



Cesarean sections at Hospital Francisco Gonzalvo, visit homes of clinic clients with outreach workers, observe educational sessions and prenatal care at MAMI and in local high schools, accompany an outreach worker to “negocios” (bars and clubs where sex workers work), and observe client sessions with the clinical psychologist, adherence counselors, and HIV testing counselors. Depending on participants’ previous experience, knowledge,

and level of Spanish proficiency, they may be able to assist clinical staff in taking clients’ vital signs and taking medical histories and doing physical exams (if client flow/time allows and the provider is in agreement). There are 23 doctors on staff, including generalists and specialists, and 12 nurses. Altogether, Clínica de Familia (including MAMI) employs 125 staff.

In addition to clinical rotations and observation, participants conduct projects of public health and clinical importance, which may include surveys, research, data extraction and analysis, assistance with client education programs, or facilitating continuing medical education for staff. Public health projects are designed to improve the care provided at Clínica de Familia and have included the creation of educational modules on nutrition, gender-based violence, and other topics, continuing education sessions for staff, implementation of client satisfaction surveys, program evaluations, a statistical analysis of HIV virologic suppression, and qualitative

interviews with women in the vertical transmission program about their family planning use, among others.

Research

For some participants, their main project may be research. Some engage in already existing research programs. Longer term participants may design their own research protocol in coordination with the clinic. American and Dominican institutional review boards/ethics committees must approve research protocols before beginning research with Clínica de Familia La Romana. Approval may take up to six months, prior to the start of the research. In the past, some participants have engaged in research that has subsequently been published, contributing to the body of scientific knowledge coming out of the Dominican Republic. Students are currently collaborating on various ongoing studies, including a sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevalence study with key populations, a study about the Zika virus with adolescent mothers and their babies, and a study about the health needs of young men.



Teaching and Training

Clínica de Familia's clinical team has weekly continuing medical education sessions, which medical and nursing students are encouraged to participate in. There is also an interactive seminar for students where participants engage in literature review, informal presentations and discussion of a variety of topics relating to providing care in a resource-limited setting, clinical case presentations and the Dominican health system, among others. Some participants engage in teaching and training clients and/or staff as part of their projects.

Cultural Activities and Immersion

Clínica de Familia facilitates participants' involvement in a variety of cultural activities within the clinic and in the community at large. Staff from Clínica de Familia host welcome dinners for all participants, and also organize other social and cultural activities and events throughout participants' time in the Dominican Republic. Dominican and American students share living space at the Casa Internacional, which provides a site for cultural and professional exchange. La Romana offers opportunities for integration and immersion into Dominican life, giving participants the opportunity to learn firsthand about diverse elements of Dominican culture.



Language Classes

The Student and Volunteer Coordinator can facilitate participants' interactions with a local

Spanish teacher and the cost of the individual classes (approximately \$25/hour) is covered by participants. Haitian Creole interpretation/translation services can also be arranged, as needed.

Program Staffing

General information, orientations, applications and pre-departure orientations are coordinated by the Clínica de Familia Student and Volunteer Coordinator. Other clinic staff, including the Executive Director and Director of Programs, are involved in the participant selection and project development, the local orientation, and general support for participants.

Schedules

The daily schedule of each student varies, depending on their interests, academic discipline and selected project, but generally each day includes time for clinical and programmatic rotations and projects. Participants are expected to work during the regular clinic hours (Monday-Thursday, 8AM-5PM; Friday, 8AM-4PM). All participants are supported by Clínica de Familia's Student and Volunteer Coordinator, who helps organize each student's schedule and provides oversight and logistical support.

Duration, Logistics, Housing and Accommodations

Students usually spend one to three months in La Romana, depending on their schedules and program requirements, and/or research interest. Housing for participants is provided at Casa Internacional, a dormitory-style student house which accommodates ten guests, in single, double, and multiple bed rooms (there are four bedrooms in total). The facility includes air conditioning in the bedrooms, a full kitchen, wireless internet, daily housekeeping, laundry service two days per week, and security services to ensure the safety of its residents. Stay at the house also includes complimentary breakfast served daily, Monday through Friday. Casa Internacional is located next to a large supermarket and is within a short walking distance of a variety of restaurants.

Transportation

For students, visitors, or guests that need airport pick-up or drop-off, the Clínica de Familia also offers airport transfers at affordable rates. Participants are welcome to use public transportation or walk to the Clínica on a daily basis, which is about a 20 minute walk from the house.

Contact Information

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In order to download the application for the global health experience at Clínica de Familia La Romana, please use the following link: www.clinicadefamilia.org.do/empleo.