Placement/Project Information
I volunteered at Cape Coast Teaching Hospital for four weeks. My first two weeks was in the Social Welfare unit and the following two weeks I spent in Public Health. For my project I wrote a 10 page paper about how medical social work is portrayed in Ghana, and also about the differences in healthcare.

Outcomes
Volunteering in Social Welfare and Public Health were both very different experiences but equally rewarding.

Social Welfare: I learned that although medical social work is not as relevant in Ghana as it is in the United States, it still plays a very important role behind the scenes. There was only one social worker for the entire hospital (whoa!) and she managed most, if not all, of the low-income patient financial services. Here I got to help and interact with patient assessments, discharge planning, and follow up.

Public Health: This department was completely run by nursing staff. Each day of the week there was different clinic, I was able to experience the Child Welfare Clinic and HIV Clinic, while also going into the different hospital wards to educate mothers with newborn babies the importance of immunizations and malaria prevention.

Skills Utilized/Developed
Critical Thinking: Assisting in finding ways to help patients whom live in poverty afford the health care that they need.
Cultural Competency: Researching about the West African culture before and during my trip. Being culturally aware of my surroundings and adjusting to the cultural changes around me.
Setting Boundaries: Wanting to go the extra mile to help patients was tempting, so setting boundaries was one of the most important skills I had to utilize during my time abroad.

Classroom Connections
613 Behavioral, Psychological and Ecological Aspects of Health and Disease: This course helped me get a better understanding of how environmental factors can lead to long-term health problems. That an individual's health not only depends on self-care but the environment that they live in as well.
699 Social Work Practice in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: This course prepared me with more education about chronic diseases and life-style changes. We learned how to have those uncomfortable conversations and finding a "new normal" way of living life.

Lessons Learned
The patient/client knows what is best for themselves, even if you think otherwise.

You cannot force someone to change if they are not ready. Old behavior is not going to change unless the person chooses to make positive life decisions on their own, and is able to take control of their life. Empowerment is key.

Advice
Get to know the locals and engage in the beautiful culture that surrounds you. Going out of your comfort zone may be hard at first, but completely worth the while.

Don't be so quick to make assumptions or judgment. Everyone has their own story. Take a step back, sit, and listen to what they want to share.

Acknowledgments
Thank you to the Office of Global Activities, Alumni Board of Governors, family and friends for financially supporting me for my special studies project. Thank you Child Family Health international for hosting me and letting me engage in a great learning experience. Also want to acknowledge Cristina Barnes for being an amazing instructor and giving me the guidance and confidence I needed in order to pursue this journey!