

Phantasmagorias in Uganda



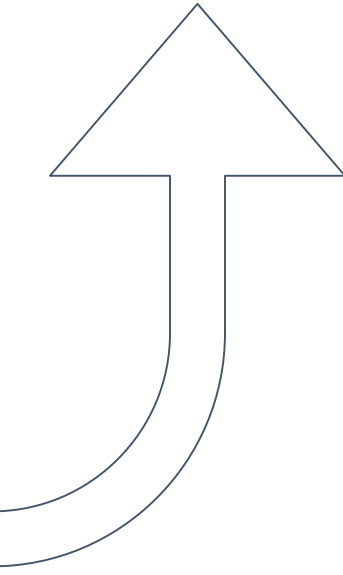
Western Uganda Interprofessional Initiative → 08/2018

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Course: IPX-Grant Scholarship (Western Uganda Initiative)

City/Country

- Uganda is an East African country full of diverse and ever-changing landscapes from the Rwenzori Mountain, to the savannahs of the major national parks. It is filled with access to diverse fruits and vegetables that spread across the country. The Ugandan people are incredibly friendly and enjoy having intimate conversations. Field sites included opportunities to interact with various health professionals in the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains near Kasese, a village hidden in the hills just northeast of Kyenjojo, and the large urban town of Mbarara, all of which were located in the western part of Uganda.
- Bugoye, Uganda
 - Rwibaale, Uganda
 - Mbarara, Uganda



Other Important Background

- Uganda is a landlocked country located on the equator in east Africa and surrounded by Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania. The country averages an elevation of 3,600 feet above sea level, which combined with the warmth and wet nature of the climate result in a very agriculturally fertile country.
- The country has a growing population of about 32 million people, 80% of which live in rural areas and survive on the environment. The country is made up of many different ethnic groups, of which the Baganda group is the largest (17%). The official languages of the country are English and Swahili, although many languages are spoken by the diverse ethnic groups.
- The Ugandan public health care system is governed by the Ministry of Health, which provides free healthcare to the country. Private health care services are also common throughout the country, and operate at a cost to patients. Many hospitals and health facilities will have both public and private wards.



Experience

Information

We had the privilege of working side by side our Ugandan colleagues at the respective health centers for each field site for 3 weeks. We initially rotated with various members of the healthcare team to gain a better sense of the relationships and work done by the various health professionals. We observed the clinical officers, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, lab technicians, administrators and even had a chance to accompany the village health team to conduct various outreach activities. As we spent more time at the clinic we developed a better sense of how the skill sets of the various professionals overlapped and complemented one another to provide care to the patient population.

Critical partnerships leveraged as a component of this global experience included **Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)**. MUST was a principal partner of Bugoye Health Center III as reflected through the rotation of students at Bugoye HC III. This includes OBGYN residents that stay at Bugoye HC III for two weeks every year as well as the interdisciplinary health students that visit for 4 weeks as part of the Community Based Education and Research Services (COBERS) program. COBERS students come in groups of 5-8 students from MUST's departments of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, lab technology, and pharmaceutical sciences and spend their time in Bugoye and other rural areas rotating in the clinics and working on a community health project. Other field sites included a collaborative partnership with the Banyantereza Sisters within the Rwibaale Health Center III as well as the Mobile Hospice of Mbarara to enrich student and faculty interactions and experiences throughout Western Uganda.

Purpose of Trip:

Pilot program to establish a collaborative relationship between members of various communities in Western Uganda and the University of Michigan, in the context of interprofessional engagement amongst numerous health professions.

Outcomes

Each respective team identified different objectives and goals designed to meet the unique needs of their assigned field site. A collective outcome achieved as a result of this project was the establishment of future student clinical rotations to occur in various healthcare settings located in Western Uganda. The project will also continue to explore methods to continue interprofessional collaborations amongst University of Michigan faculty and students from diverse healthcare disciplines.

Skills Utilized/Developed

Three skills important to global nursing/health utilized or developed during this experience.

1. The importance and art of improvising
2. Dedication paired with strong work ethic
3. Strategies to facilitate activism and advocacy

Classroom Connections

There were no specific classes taken prior to travel, however there were pre-travel meetings with agenda topics and invited guest presenters to deliver tips, guidance, and other types of information to adequately prepare for trip to Uganda. In addition, team members included students and faculty with varying experiences in international travel, public health, and program development.

Lessons

Accepting uncertainty and being patient will become your best friends while traveling in Uganda. The punctuality of the United States culture does not translate across borders. When addressing locals, always start with a conversation and have some small talk before going into a request for something or asking them a question. Being direct is not always appropriate

Be open to new experiences. You don't know what you don't know.

Always reevaluate preconceived perceptions and misconceptions of your experiences. Many instances are much different than you imagined and that's a good thing.

Never stop learning. There is always something to learn.

Career Connections

- Further development of critical thinking and creative problem solving skills as a professional nurse.
- Continue to strengthen abilities to complete thorough health examinations and the collection of pertinent health history to provide patient care with decrease dependency on advance technology to support care.
- Applying the value of always challenging your personal paradigms in order to gain needed perspective from another individual's point of view.
- A sense of personal connections to the daily lives of individuals in countries much different the US.
- Global experiences work to foster a foundation of humility, openness, and acceptance of others

Advice

- Seize the opportunity to enhance your academic training through a global health experience.
- Prepare for day to day living in a low resource environment which will require adjustment to common U.S. "conveniences" such as readily available internet access or hot water.
- Acknowledge your personal biases and stereotypes in advance to your global travel. This acknowledgement may serve to heighten your awareness to fully realize, process, and appreciate the differences in culture you will experience.

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