

Thailand: A Global Health Experience

Thailand Study Abroad 2019

Course: NURS 423

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City/Country

- Destination - Khon Kaen, Thailand
- Thailand's population: 69 million
- Close in size to Texas
- 1/10 of population lives in Bangkok
- Khon Kaen University • established in 1966 • now has ~40,000 students
- 22 faculties • Faculty of Medicine — also a university hospital



Other Important Background

- Top 5 leading causes of death: Cancer 19%; Ischemic Heart Disease 10%; Stroke 10%; Respiratory Infections 9%; COPD 4%
- Considered a developing country in SE Asia
- Thailand has universal health coverage costing \$80/person annually



Experience

Information

During the month of June, 15 nursing students embarked on a three-week study abroad journey in Khon Kaen, Thailand. During this period, students from both global health and community health classes completed 80 hours of clinical work. We were shown many differences between Thailand and the US in terms of treatment, patient acuity, patient conditions, and hospitals in both community and private settings.

Purpose of Trip

We had the opportunity to learn about both rural and urban nursing. We visited the SEICU (surgical and emergency), PICU (pediatric), and CVICU (cardiovascular) in the KKU university hospital. Some students were able to explore the psychiatric unit, monk floor, and emergency room as well. We also experienced the rural nursing component, we each were given a case study in a community and assessed some patients in the local village.

Outcomes

- We spent time learning about the culture, including attending Thai language classes.
- The students shadowed nurses in the community and hospital settings as well as listened to lectures from doctors, professors, nurses, student leaders and more. One of which is a leading researcher on liver flukes.
- The main project the students completed was having a three day stay in a local villager's home. We were taken in the homes and accepted as a member of their family. During this stay, we assessed a community member. This experience was accomplished by using many of the techniques learned in Thai class, various lectures, and by other members of the community. The outcome was impacting on community members as well as the students.
- We learned the values of close family relationships and how working together as a cohesive team is much more productive than as an individual team member.

Skills Utilized/Developed

We focused on cultural competency, open mindedness, and developed different ways to critically think. We were exposed to disease processes common in Thailand, unusual to the US. We attended lectures from doctors, professors, colleagues, nurses, health leaders, and up and coming students.

Lessons Learned

We learned the importance of focusing on developing solutions to the most widespread diseases and disparities in each country. It takes time to understand challenges in other countries, however, it is necessary to have empathy and be understanding. We experienced the importance of learning one's culture and how beliefs, traditions, and community "rules" play a large part in healthcare.



Career Connections

- This experience helped many students be acutely aware of differences in cultures and allowed us to learn how to ask culturally-tailored questions.
- We observed the differences in hospital functions and learned many different approaches to healthcare in unfamiliar countries.

Classroom Connections

- N420/N421: Global Health
- N152: Health Assessment



Advice

- Prepare to travel with an open mind!
- Be aware of cultural differences and treat them as learning opportunities.
- Take advantage of the many opportunities you will face.

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