

**Penn State College of Medicine Global Health Center  
Medical Student Project Report – Ryan Kenney**

**Medical Student:** Ryan Kenney, MS 2; rkenney@pennstatehealth.psu.edu

**Program/Project Title:** Global Health Scholars Program in Koforidua, Ghana

**Program/Project Location:** Koforidua, Ghana

**Program/Project Timetable:** June 15 – July 15, 2019

**Summary of the Experience:**

During the month I spent most of my time in the pediatric wards. I mostly observed, shadowed, and learned, and occasionally aided the doctors. In the NICU and I would take and monitor the infants' vitals and, in the outpatient pediatric center, I would do heart and lung exams as well as other physical exams. My main project I worked on was teaching "Stop The Bleed" course to nurses and midwives. We would go through a power point presentation then demonstrate how to stop different bleeds using a manikin. We taught the students how to use a tourniquet, packing gauze, and the appropriate way to apply pressure in a emergency situation.

**Learning Achievements:**

It is hard to pinpoint what the *most* important part of the trip was as there were so many significant portions. I would say having a world view was a great part of my learning. It is always eye opening to see how a group of people live their lives. And talking with the Ghanaians about their live in Ghana and them asking me questions about the US provided great conversation and further understanding on how the Ghanaians viewed the world and how I viewed the world. The similarities and differences in topics such as religion, death, love, relationships, and global interactions were priceless.

This experience helped me engage in warm culture in a way I have never experienced. I grew up in a very cold culture climate and was impressed by how warm and friendly everyone was. This exposure made me want to act in a way warm culture cultivates. I feel I am much more open to greeting and talking with strangers after a month of strangers greeting and talking with me.

One of my favorite memories of the trip was wondering over to a bonfire where I believed my friends were and realizing I stumbled into a small drum circle of Ghanaians. They were happy to see me and let me stay and play with them. We talked long into the

night about politics, love, war, and about our different countries. A person from The Netherlands and a person from Belgium who were there on vacation. It was a great gathering of different cultures and it was interesting to hear everyone's impressions on each other's country.

### **Program Strengths:**

I think the most valuable experience was just being in a different part of the world engaging with a group of people I would not have met otherwise. I can read about the Ghanaian people, watch documentaries, or video chat with them, but none of those would add up to the experience of going to their country and interacting with them face to face. Any interaction that was set up by Hershey (and there were many) that had us engaging in culture with someone from Ghana was a strength of the program. That being said, some of the best conversations came spontaneously without and prompting. The Ghanaians were so kind and eager to talk to us.

### **Program Shortcomings:**

Whenever we were able to talk in Twi the Ghanaians became very excited. They were thrilled that we were talking in their native language and eagerly spoke by to us in Twi. Sadly, most of us only knew 2 or 3 phrases. We had 2 language lessons but they were cut short and taught us lots of phrases for fruit but we lacked words that were frequently said (such as yes and no). Perhaps if there were more language lessons or lessons prior to leaving for Ghana the experience could have been better

### **Impact:**

I came on the trip because I am interested in medical missions in the future. This trip has helped support and confirm that ideology. I enjoy working with underserved populations and Ghana was filled with people who struggled to afford basic needs as well as healthcare. As for the Ghana healthcare system, despite having low resources and funding, it was still impressive. Their CHPS compounds which act as community health outposts showed their dedication to the rural villages. Much of their spending went towards preventative rather than reactionary medicine. Their universal healthcare did not cover every medical need but it gave every person at least some form of health care.

Prior to going abroad I had very few assumptions. I knew it would be a different world so I tried to contain my expectations. I came in with the thought that Ghanaians were a religious people with some tribal spiritual influences, but I did not know how they would interact or impact their culture and daily living so I did not bother forming any assumptions. Until you know someone it is dangerous to make assumptions outside the fact that they are human and deserve respect and care.











