

## **Nursing students gain international experience in Peru**

**by Audralynn See - Monday, July 11, 2011**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/13157/nursing-students-gain-international-experience-in-peru/>

Knowledge of culture, international nursing practices and real-world experience are among the skills a group of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh nursing students brought home with them following their recent trip to Peru.

“The College of Nursing (CON) looks for locations that can have a mutually beneficial arrangement,” said Patricia Vander Loop, assistant clinical professor. “This partnership would allow students to meet their community clinical course objectives while becoming immersed in a new and diverse culture.”

During their trip international nursing trip, which lasted from May 17 through June 12, 21 students traveled to the Alto Cayma area, which is a small, rural community near the major city of Arequipa. The group also traveled to Lima, Puno and Cusco.

“The 21 students volunteered in a kitchen that serves approximately 800 people living in poverty, they assisted in care of children in the daycare, did home visits and demographic surveys, and cared for individuals and families in the health clinic,” Vander Loop said. “They also participated in well-child visits, immunizations, emergent services and birth center activities.”

Brittany Wall, a senior nursing student, said she was thankful for the opportunity to interact with the people of Peru and give them invaluable medical advice.

"Being able to use our nursing expertise while providing medical care and advice to people who would otherwise have none was truly a priceless experience," Wall said.

Wall also said the trip gave her a greater appreciation for technology.

"Actively participating in the health care team at the clinics and hospitals taught me the importance of looking at the patient, not the machine, to determine the problem. Without the use of cardiograms, ultrasounds, or IV pumps, I was able to care for patients by looking at them, not technology," Wall said. "I really had to rely on my instincts and observational skills...those observational skills and experiences will make me an exceptional nurse in the future and an invaluable asset to any health care team."

The conditions in Peru also forced the students to learn about themselves, Vander Loop said.

“They were exposed to extreme poverty and very sad stories,” Vander Loop said. “The final conclusions focused on the value of community members that work and care for each other. They commented frequently that this experience would help them to care for families in the U.S. with a more eager and open-minded attitude.”

During the last six years, nursing students at UW Oshkosh have not only been able to compare

international health systems and experience new cultures through the international clinical trip, but have also had the opportunity to practice their skills in an international setting.

“The desired health outcomes take years to occur and cannot be measured in such a short trip,” Vander Loop said. “However, every interaction will hopefully have a positive impact on the reputation of Americans and nurses. We hope that the memories of our shared smiles and hugs will comfort people for years to come.”

Students who are interested in the international clinical trips can visit <http://www.uwosh.edu/oie/> for more information. There are currently opportunities for international trips in the fall and spring interim.

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