

Cynthia Nino

Cusco, Peru, Maximo Nivel

Summer 2018



Drexel medical student Cynthia Nino in Cusco, Peru with Maximo Nivel.

"For my first medical experience abroad, I traveled to Cusco, Peru with my mom, a registered nurse, to participate in Máximo Nivel's Healthcare and Medical Volunteer Program. In Peru, my understanding of healthcare and medicine was broadened in a way that only a full immersion experience can create. Peru provides healthcare to all of its citizens regardless of their ability to pay. However, the volume of need results in a strain that is felt most by those living and working in the poorest parts of Peru. In the clinic I volunteered at, Clinica de Salud Choco, basic materials such as hand sanitizer and distilled water are carefully rationed. Before leaving for my trip, I was instructed to bring my own supplies—such as hand sanitizer, gloves, face masks and pens—so that I would not use the clinic's limited supplies.



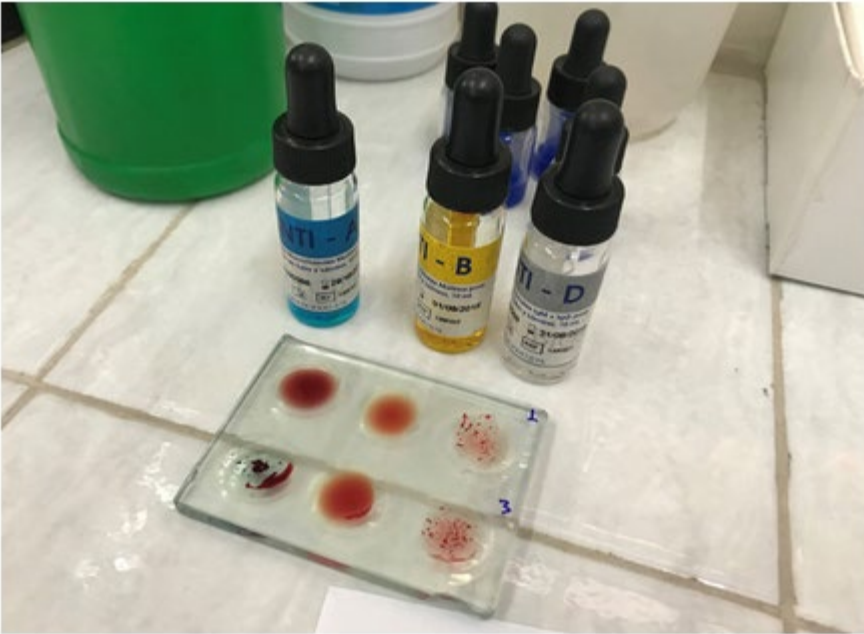
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"My responsibilities at the clinic included check-in, triage and scribing. During the earliest part of my mornings, I was busy making sure everyone who was waiting to be seen had arrived early enough to reserve their time with the doctor. Then my mom and I would take their vitals and take their file to the growing stack on top of the doctor's desk. Once most of the patients had been triaged, I would move into the doctor's room and help her with filling out the patient documents. These documents are very important and must be completed meticulously for the clinic to be properly reimbursed and funded. I am a native Spanish speaker, so I was able to understand most of the patient interaction; however, the medical Spanish classes I took at Drexel added to the medical terminology I was able to understand. Filling out the documents would usually take up the remainder of my time at the clinic, and my shift often ended before I could help the doctor with all of her patients.



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"The doctor was out of the office during one of my days in clinic, so I observed in the lab instead. There, I was able to see many of the tests I had just learned about in my immunology course first-hand. I watched the technician test for blood type, HIV and pregnancy, and perform blood smears. While we waited for results of some of the tests, the technician also showed me slides he had archived. The most interesting one was of a sputum sample from a patient with tuberculosis, which he mentioned is a problem their population struggles with from time-to-time.



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"Overall, I was blown away by the efficiency and creativity of the doctors and other workers at the clinic. Their efforts to care for their community are immense and I am grateful that my first medical experience abroad was so eye-opening.



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"As far as tourism and exploring goes, Peru has many beautiful sites that my mom and I did our best to see during our short time there. During our post-shift afternoons, we explored the city of Cusco and sampled the cuisine. On the few days off we had, we traveled to Vinicunca, commonly known as Rainbow Mountain, where we climbed up 5,000 km to see the colorful mountains. We also took the wonderful train ride up to Machu Picchu where we marveled at the landscapes and learned about the Incan culture. A lot of climbing was involved to get to these beautiful sites but, like the rest of my Peru trip, it was worth every step.