

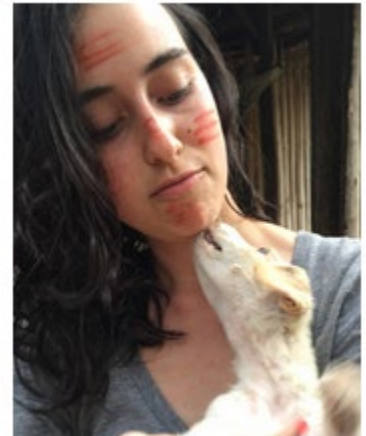


## Global Health Education Student Experiences

### **Hiral Lathia, First Year Medical Student**

Ecuador, Child Health Family International (CHFI) [www.CFHI.org](http://www.CFHI.org)  
Summer 2016

"When I arrived in Ecuador, I wasn't sure what to expect or how the trip was going to turn out, but at the end of the month, I knew this was the best thing I could have done with my summer. Traveling to Ecuador through Child Health Family International was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life. Not only did I gain invaluable knowledge from different clinicians and nurses, but I also gained new friendships, a better grip on the Spanish language, and a multitude of memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life.



"I spent my weeks in Ecuador participating in many different activities. During my first week, I worked with the Ministry of Public Health traveling to different homes and helping with mosquito control. I would inspect the water tanks of homeowners to look for mosquito larvae. I would also add larvaecide to the tanks in order to prevent mosquitoes from reproducing there. I would then educate the residents of the home on the symptoms of Dengue, Zika, and Chikengunya and what to do if any members of the family exhibited those symptoms and different precautions the community could take to prevent these diseases from spreading.



"Through this experience, I was able to learn a lot about the different diseases that plague that area of Ecuador as well as the different things the country does as a whole to prevent the spread of disease. The next week I worked with obstetricians doing pregnancy check-ups. Due to the fact that many people in the community do not trust the public health system, many women do not come to the hospital for routine check-ups during their pregnancy. To help change this, obstetricians travel through the community to different homes to register pregnancies and perform check-ups for the mothers-to-be. By accompanying these doctors, I learned about different milestones to look for in pregnancy and how to perform a routine pregnancy check-up on women. After the first two weeks in Ecuador, I was able to form a deeper understanding of the public health care system and a great respect for the professionals that spent their days doing this work.

"The next couple of weeks in Ecuador were spent shadowing rural doctors in the town of Puyo. The first doctor I shadowed was a Cuban doctor who had moved to Ecuador after medical school. From him I gained invaluable knowledge about different diseases and medications as well as little tricks to identify different symptoms and such. I then shadowed a doctor who worked mostly with the indigenous Shuar people of Ecuador. It was interesting to see how traditional medicine of the Shuar was combined with modern medicine to help treat people. The last week we spent with a Shuar tribe in the middle of the Amazon. We



hiked six hours to reach their community and then lived with them for three days. On my way there, I ended up falling and hurting my shoulder and because of that I was able to experience the traditional medicine firsthand. The chief did some manipulations on my shoulder and burned a medicinal plant to wrap around my shoulder to ease the pain. While I was skeptical at first, the effects of the plants were extraordinary. Through living with the tribe, we were able to learn about the different medicinal plants they used, their culture, and their day-to-day life. One of my favorite parts of the trip has to be being in the middle of the Amazon and playing soccer with some indigenous children.

"Overall, this trip was everything I could have wanted and more. I gained irreplaceable memories, a vast amount of knowledge about medicine, a better grasp on Spanish, and most of all unique and invaluable mentors I would have never gained otherwise."





