

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC MEDICAL SERVICE TRIPS

Medical service trips to Peralta, Dominican Republic have been up and running since 2004. While the trips are staffed primarily by Rush students and faculty, volunteers from other institutions have also participated.

Why the DR and Why Peralta?

In brief, when this program was initially conceptualized, a number of factors were taken into consideration. These included community need, the existence of strong community leadership in order to foster long term relationships and eventually a self-sustaining medical system, relative geographic and political stability, and accessibility and proximity to Chicago. The community of Peralta, located in the mountainous area of southwestern DR met these criteria, and we have since forged strong ties with the people of Peralta.

Work Accomplished

Over the past thirteen years, the program has sent a total of 8 cross-specialty teams per year to Peralta, usually comprised of 10-18 people each. These include medicine, pediatrics, med/peds, General and pediatric surgery, ENT, Urology, Urogynecology, Orthopedics, anesthesia, nursing, and students (Medical, Nurse Practitioner, and Physician Assistant). These teams work for 1 week at a time, providing primary care, public health services, and a variety of surgical interventions to this community. The model we have adopted emphasizes collaboration and the foundation of strong relationships with local town leaders and community members, as well as helping to develop a locally sustainable public health and primary care program.

Funding

Medications and supplies are obtained through a number of sources, including the AMERICARES Company, MAP International, Subsidy from the Department of Student Affairs, subsidy and donations from the central Rush Pharmacy, and Project Cure.

Personal expenses for the trip are the responsibility of the individual. The total cost for a week is approximately \$1500-1600 per person. This amount is broken down into logistics fee and airfare. The logistics fee for the trip is \$950, which includes everything: lodging, food, water, on-the-ground transportation, and translation services. Airfare tends to vary by season. In recent years, we have been fortunate enough to be able to offer scholarships to all participating students and residents in the amount of \$850 per person, and to nurses for \$400 per person. While this is not a guarantee, we do anticipate being able to continue to offer some scholarship assistance.

Time Allocation

The medical school has created a Community Health Elective which allows medical students to get credit for this trip. Please contact Dr. Mariam Aziz for further details regarding requirements for this elective. Students in other schools (NP or PA) will need to discuss the issue of credit with their respective schools. Internal medicine and Med/Peds residents can obtain credit if they participate as part of the Global Health Elective, thru the department of internal medicine. Residents in other disciplines may be able to obtain credit, but would need to discuss this individually with their program directors.

What to Expect

Peralta is a beautiful community with gracious, generous hosts and wonderful people. Teams usually stay in a house donated for our use by a local family. Each day is spent working in a clinic-type setting either in Peralta or in neighboring communities, but we return to Peralta each evening. Physical conditions are quite basic, with intermittent running water and electricity; thus showers are cold and internet is scarce, if available at all. Locally prepared foods (yuca, plantains, bananas, rice, beans, avocado, tropical fruits, chicken, and goat) are served—there are no other culinary options. There is little privacy, and a sense of adventure, flexibility, good health, and the ability to go without some creature comforts is a must!

The above is a brief description, and we would be happy to talk in more detail with anyone who would like more info prior to committing to a trip. Once you have finalized a trip date with us, however, you are expected to fulfill that commitment to the program.

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