

Nenette Caceres—Roatan Trip Report

The four weeks I spent in Roatan were incredible; I was volunteering in a clinic in Honduras. The first few days were not great, I had housing issues. The place I had reserved was not at all what I expected. The apartment was far from the clinic, it was not in a safe area—the owner completely misrepresented the apartment. I decided to leave that place and stayed in the Peggy's apartment for a few days until I was able to get a place. The place I got was right across from the clinic, so in the end that worked out. My days at the clinic began at 7:30 AM. Before entering the clinic, I would stop by the local food vendors, and I would eat a "baleada" which is a flour tortilla filled with beans, cheese, eggs and/or cream.

The first week I was in the clinic, I was assigned to do triage. It was my responsibility to take patients blood pressure, pulse, height/weight, etc. I was the first person they saw, after the receptionist. I had to take down their chief complaint and write notes for the physician to read. Most of the patients that came in were "morenos" or dark-skinned people. Honduras has a small population of black people, but in Roatan most of the people were black or as we say in Honduras "garifuna." Garifuna people don't speak Spanish, they speak their own dialect. Luckily for me, most of the people that came to the clinic either spoke Spanish and/or English; there were only several occasions that I recall where I couldn't communicate with the patient. While doing triage, I was able to work with children, something I had never done before. Although I like children, I don't think I could work with them in the future. It was very difficult to take their vital signs; they were crying and not being cooperative. Thanks to this trip I realized that working with children is not for me.

For the next three weeks I rotated through pediatrics, the pharmacy, and physician shadowing. I really enjoyed my rounds. Every rotation was different so I learned a little about everything. The most memorable patient I came across was while I was working in triage. The patient was young teenager; she must've been 18 or 19 years old. She came in and her chief complaints were that of a pregnant woman; morning sickness, frequent urination, increased appetite, etc. We went ahead and gave her a pregnancy test, and it resulted being positive. So she was pregnant. As soon as we told her she was pregnant, she broke down crying and told us that she had gotten raped. I was so surprised and sad for her. I didn't even know what to say to console her. She also told us that the perpetrator gave her a pill to take after the incident (I assumed the morning after pill). Her story was very sad.

On the third week that I was in Roatan, I was sleeping when I was awoken by a 7.1 magnitude earthquake. It was very scary; it reminded me of the Northridge earthquake. Luckily no one was hurt. There were a few structures that went down, but not in Roatan, most of the damage was in San Pedro Sula. Another event that I witness was demonstration/protest of the local people; there was a lot of political turmoil at the time.

When I was out of the clinic I hung out with the volunteers at the beach. I went snorkeling, tree lining, and diving. It was an awesome trip!