

## **PS2.039**

### **'Learning whilst serving' - skills developed volunteering in Belize**

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I spent 14 weeks volunteering at the 'Hillside Health Care Center' in Belize in 2014. I created this opportunity as an 'Out of Programme Experience' (OOPE) whilst training in general practice. The skills I developed in Belize made me a better doctor hence my enthusiasm for encouraging others to create similar opportunities.

'Learning whilst serving' is the organisations motto which expresses the opportunities available to contribute to the running of the clinic whilst learning about global health. The clinic runs an educational course on global health delivered by professionals who have experience of volunteering all over the world. This put the challenges faced locally into a global context.

I enjoyed the multi-disciplinary approach to health care. As well as doctors there were representatives from physiotherapy and pharmacy as well as physician assistants in training on elective placements. The challenge of delivering health care in this resource poor setting fostered a great team spirit. This was especially apparent on the mobile clinics we undertook to the distant villages in rural Belize. Here time pressures and limited resources meant we had to work together to see all the patients and get the work done before we had to move on.

The experience of volunteering in Belize helped my development as a doctor in many ways. The lack of investigations available meant I had to rely on my clinical acumen much more so these basic medical skills became much sharper. I also noticed over time that I became more able to handle uncertainty; the lack of diagnostic tests meant decisions had to be made quickly based on the information available. Working with limited resources in challenging conditions also increased my resilience.

The views of a student on placement at Hillside are also considered. I strongly recommend volunteering abroad whilst training in general practice.