

### **Roshni Shah – Short Term Program to India, 2009**

My short term international program was a trip to India for two weeks. I was a part of a team of thirteen allied health students from Charles Sturt University (Orange and Wagga Wagga campuses) who were fortunate enough to experience a trip of a lifetime. Six students from Wagga Wagga were located in Malavalli for the two weeks which is sixtyfour kilometres from Pune, one of the major cities of the Maharashtra state. The other seven students (including myself) were in a village called Pen which is located eighty kilometres south of Mumbai, the capital city of the Maharashtra State.

Our group in Pen, was supervised by an employee of India Study Abroad Centre who lived locally in Pen. His name is Sharad, who looked after us very well. Over the course of two weeks we enjoyed the true Indian way of life- eating the authentic Indian cuisines such as vegetable curry, rice and roti (bread) etc and experienced visiting health clinics and hospitals. At first I did feel a bit of culture shock as the way of life in India is very different to the Indian lifestyle practiced in Australia. For example, the people in India are never running on time and it is accepted when they are late. Another difference is that the village people in India wear the traditional clothing, however in the big cities there is a strong influence of the western culture in regards to food, clothing and social scene.

This trip allowed me to witness first hand the differences in the Indian and Australian Health Care Systems. Australia has one of the most advanced health care systems and yet we still manage to winge about it. I am really grateful to be living in Australia with such a wonderful health care system where I am able to contribute my knowledge and skills within pharmacy as a health care professional. In India, the pharmacy I saw was long and narrow which was part of the private hospital in Pen. There was no logical system in place in relation to how medications were kept and antibiotics could be given over the counter without doctors' prescriptions. This would never be seen in the Australian Pharmacies because antibiotics can only be administered if there is a prescription. Another key difference between the health care systems was that we were allowed to witness couple of surgeries for example cataract and a hysterectomy alongside the surgeons.

My overall purpose of going to India was to experience and learn the culture and the difference in the health care systems. After coming back, I realised how both the Indian and Australian health care systems are on either end of the spectrum. I am of Indian background and I felt it was extremely important for me to recognise and understand the impact of the health care has on the community in India.

As a future pharmacist, I hope to learn Hindi fluently so I am able to communicate to the Indians living in Australia that may feel comfortable to express their health concerns in their local language. I also hope to provide my services in India and other developing countries in the future. I can hopefully do this by

working alongside Children Future India (CFI) and help build houses and huts for the village people and also help improve the health of sick people.

I believe that CSU global should continue to organise this kind of trips to foreign countries in the future to raise awareness of the health in other countries. I will continue to promote my experience to India to other CSU students. I think it is extremely important to enhance health student's awareness of how lucky they are in Australia to have such a wonderful health care system and bring to their attention that other countries are not as fortunate as ours in terms of health care facilities and access.