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Country: Peru (Hospital Essalud Adolfo Guevara)

Describe the pattern of disease/illness of interest in the population with which you will be working and discuss this in the context of global health.

Peru has a very diverse range of climates and altitudes, at the time of the 2012 WHO country profile they had a population of just under 30 million. The average life expectancy is roughly 10 years lower than the UK at 73 years, though the under age 5 mortality rate is 25/1000 live births compared to 5/1000 in the UK.

Unfortunately infectious diseases are a significant problem in Peru, large areas of the north are very high risk for malaria, malnutrition commonly due to poverty is a common problem and as such many children have significantly stunted growth as a consequence. Conversely obesity is becoming an increasing problem amongst the better off.

Due to poor infrastructure and frequent landslides and other natural disasters (which often cause the injuries requiring hospital treatment) as well as poor health and safety, dangerous working conditions and common disregard for driving regulations leading to frequent road traffic collisions, trauma is a common occurrence and getting trauma patients to hospital can be quite complex especially as ambulances are rare and very expensive. A study done in three of the largest cities in Peru (Lima, Ayacucho, and Pucallpa) comparing standards in both private and public hospitals against the WHO report Guidelines for Essential Trauma Care found that the resources for trauma are inadequate in both infrastructure and human resources though this was reported to be slightly better in Lima, the capital.

Describe pattern of health provision in relation to the country in which you will be working and contrast this with other countries or with the UK.

It is not a very wealthy country and total expenditure on health (as a percentage of GDP) is only 5.1% compared to the UK 9.4%.

Health care is available to all workers (both government, including the military, and private sector employees) in Peru through insurance paid by the employer/government and there is a separate Private health care system.

The military and government employees have a separate system which at the time I was in Peru was the most efficient and well run system.

workers who are covered by a different system paid for by their employer and then topped up by paying for other equipment etc. at the point of need. For example attending the general medicine clinic was free for the workers however; those who didn't have the insurance could attend a clinic at the hospital and pay a small fee for the consultation. These patients however had extremely short consultations and it was very difficult to arrange follow up and so there was very little continuity of care. The private hospital that I visited for the last week was very similar to NHS style health care services in the UK.

Compare trauma care in Peru with the UK major trauma centre. Compare injury patterns as well as treatments and management. Learn how trauma is assessed,

transported and managed/treated.

Unfortunately I spent my first week in general medicine due to a misunderstanding of the organisers and while I saw many interesting patients the clinic ran very similarly to GP in the UK and although we had a few musculoskeletal referrals there was no trauma care undertaken by that Doctor. However, in my second week I was placed in the Emergency department of one of the public hospitals in Cusco. I saw a very wide variety of patients as the emergency department caters to all specialities. I found it both interesting and quite difficult that services are only provided to those who can pay. I found this particularly difficult to understand when after examining a patient who had a large incision in his left leg from an electric saw I was directed to traumatology and instead of being immediately treated which is what I was expecting due to the depth of wound and the volume of bleeding I was handed a list of required equipment analgesia and antibiotics, then instructed to take him to the pharmacy and then the cashiers before they would manage his wound. I also found it difficult that their analgesia and pain control was much more basic and a lot lower strength than I have seen used in the UK, the patient with the large leg wound was prescribed one 500mg paracetamol once a day.

Personal/Professional development: improve practical skills and communication skills as well as Spanish language ability. Experience more of Peruvian culture and landscape. Reflection on activities and experiences.

I unfortunately had only infrequent opportunity to practice my skills in the emergency department though I feel my examination skills improved as I examined a large number of patients and at first did so with only limited communication as my Spanish improved. Due to the limited education English is not spoken in Peru and only a few speak or understand it, the Peruvian people learn Spanish from a young age but they also speak Quechuan or Aymara depending on their cultural and ancestral background. This became difficult when I had patients who spoke only Quechuan as I only learnt a few words the language barrier was a challenge I really enjoyed as I found my Spanish improving quickly and it became easier to understand more of what was going on.

Peru has a very interesting racial and cultural background thanks to the many different civilisations that have populated the republic. The Spanish invasion and slaves from Africa have greatly influenced the gene pool and it was quite startling the difference in facial features and stature. I found that as fascinated as I was by the Peruvian people with their diverse cultures, legends and beliefs, especially in rural areas where they had seen few tourists, I stood out and drew attention for my height (as I was taller than most of the men), skin colour and hair colour this was usually not a problem as the majority of people I met were interesting and very welcoming, though occasionally it became a little intrusive. Overall the country was incredibly beautiful, the culture fascinating and the people welcoming and keen to explain their culture and share their wonderful country, the food and all that Peru had to offer.