

Child Family Health International - Bolivia

Bolivia is a poorer landlocked country sitting near the center of South America and is currently coming out of the tail end of political turmoil. Government corruption from former president Evo Morales meant a mismanagement of funds including healthcare funding. In 2018, myself and several other students visited the city of Tarija to act as observers and research the medical situation of the country through working with doctors across the city. Throughout our time we assisted in providing oral vaccinations for local schools, learned about the disease of chagas which is endemic to the region, and witnessed emergency medical procedures involving burn patients and women going through child birth. Our insight took us into large hospitals, rural outreach clinics, and specialty disease clinics. What was discovered is that lack of funding meant less paid working hours for doctors and other medical staff, with many working volunteer hours. Additionally, out of pocket were expenses for extra medical gear, and pharmaceuticals that are heavily received through donations. During September 2018 there were near daily strikes occurring citywide, which included some of the doctors we were shadowing and assisting. As of the beginning of 2019, Bolivia adopted a universal healthcare system to further insure approximately half of the country. A doubling in physician hirers still only sees 130 physicians per 100,000 citizens, and general funding in the health department is still divided among the Ministry of Health and Sports oversight.