

Healthcare Access: Evaluating the U.S. and Bolivia through Global Learning



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Background:

Bolivia is a land-locked country in South America, and the Child Family Health International program took place in the city of Tarija, a medium-sized metropolis. Due to the developments in its healthcare system, the country now has two healthcare systems, private and SUS (Sistema Unica de Salud) which was developed in 2019. In the SUS system patients can get access to primary health care areas with little to no charge. Based on 2022, the government health spending is the majority of what is spent on health expenditure.

Map of Tarija, Bolivia



Table. 1 Comparison of key factors Tarija, Bolivia and Washington State.

	Tarija, Bolivia	Washington, US
Population	12,244,159	8,176,300
National income level	LMIC	HIC
Health care system	Mixed (private and SUS)	Mixed (private and public)
Physicians / 10,000	12.84	22.8

Goal

Through my observations I evaluated the social determinants of health including healthcare access and quality in the social and community context.

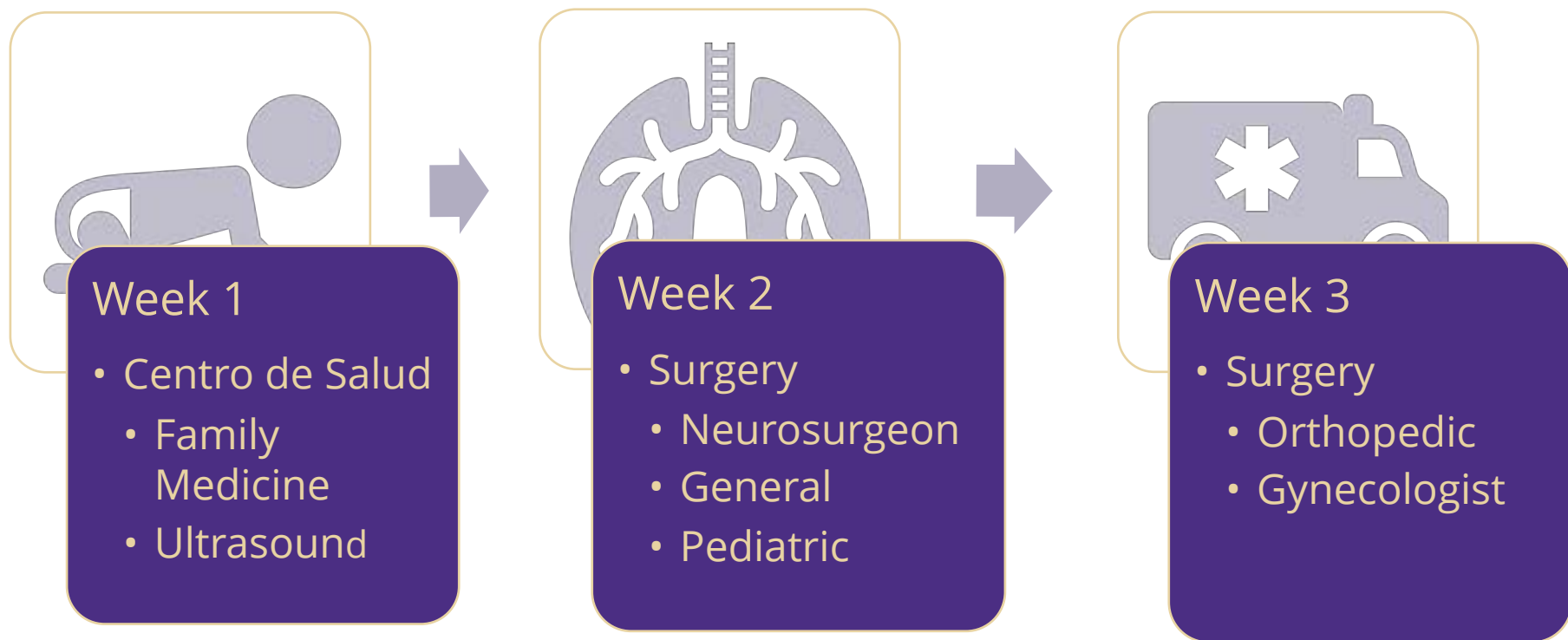


Me in front of Centro de Salud Integral Eduardo Avaroa.



Me in front of Hospital San Juan de Dios.

Timeline of Observations:



Healthcare Access

- Centro de Salud Integral Eduardo Avaroa and Hospital San Juan de Dios typically served individuals from lower-income populations.
- Many individuals travel from rural areas to access these services.
- Services to many patients, from infants to elderly.
- Due to limitation of spots with doctors, individuals arrive early and in long lines in anticipation of securing an appointment.

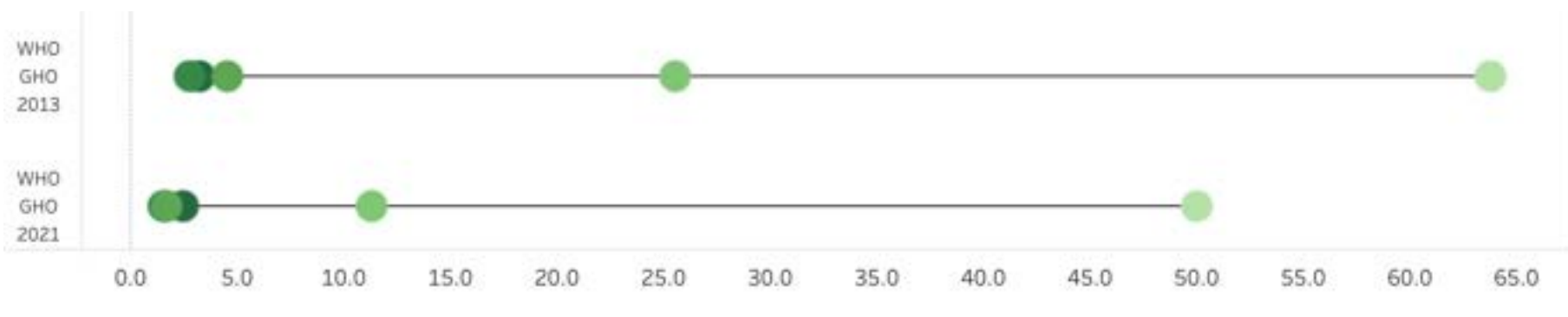


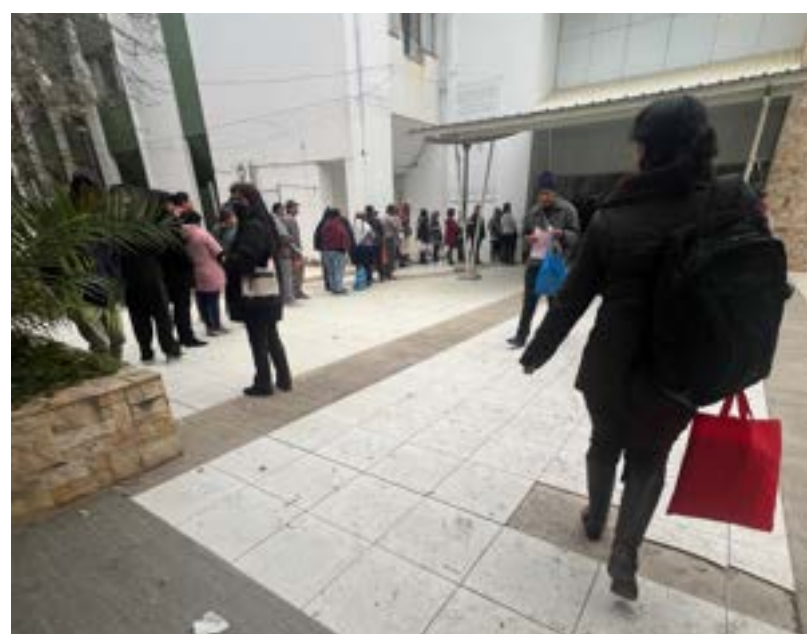
Fig. 1 Population experiencing financial hardship when out-of-pocket health spending exceeds 40% of the household's budget.



Lauren and I with the family medicine doctor we shadowed.



Lauren and I with Dra. Natalia, the Anesthesiologist we shadowed.



Lines to be attended at Hospital San Juan de Dios.



Preventive Medicine

- In the Centro de Salud the nursing students approach patients with information about the importance of vaccinations.
- The lactation month celebration was very interactive with patients such as pamphlets.
- In-person preventive outreach was commonly used to reach individuals who lacked access to clinical services. The Centro went to a primary school to test students for Chagas.



Fig. 2 Exclusive breastfeeding under six months.



Lauren and I at the lactation fair during lactation month.



One of the many informational posters during the fair.



Fig. 3 Hypertension treatment coverage among adults aged 30-79 years with hypertension.



Informational booklet on vaccines.



Me on the transportation to the primary school where students were tested for Chagas.

Global Learning

This experience provided an opportunity to become more immersed in the local culture and community. This trip reinforced the importance of cultural adaptability and openness to different customs and perspectives. It also broadened my understanding of how social, cultural and healthcare systems may function differently across regions of the world.



Lauren and I with other people we got to meet through the program.



Me in a museum in Tarija.



Traditional food from Tarija.



Me at the salt flats in Uyuni.

Acknowledgements

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References

