

Sarah Glover

**Graduation Year:** Junior

**College:** Science

**Major(s):** Neuroscience and Behavior in the College of Science

**Minors(s):** Poverty Studies, Italian

**Scholar Group Membership:** NA

**Did you received other funding for this project?:** NA

**Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding?** No

**More details on CUSE funding assistance?** My medical internship in Nepal was a life-changing experience which would have been impossible to complete without the financial support provided by the Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement at Notre Dame. The internship required a substantial fee which consisted of ground costs, administrative fees, and monetary support for the private hospital where the internship took place, in order to assist in its mission to provide affordable quality healthcare for the local community in Bharatpur, Nepal. I worked four different jobs both on and off campus during the spring semester in order to pay for many of the additional costs associated with this unique experience, as my parents could not afford to assist me financially. However, the funding from CUSE was essential to my project as it covered my flights, vaccines, and the ground costs of my internship.

**Project Title:** Projects Abroad Medical Internship in Nepal

**Project Location:** Chitwan Medical College Teaching Hospital located in Bharatpur, Chitwan, Nepal

**ND Faculty Mentor:** Professor Patrick Vivirito

**Project Type:** Internship

**Why did you undertake this project/experience?** Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Career discernment and/or preparation

**Did your funded experience help you:**

**[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]:** Very Much

**[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]:** Very Much

**[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]:** Very Much

**[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]:** Very Much

**[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:**Very Much

**Tell us about your experience.**

During the month of June, CUSE funding allowed me to join students from around the world to participate in a three week medical internship through an international service organization called Projects Abroad. The internship involved daily hospital rotations during which the other interns and I attended various departmental ward rounds and both inpatient and outpatient procedures in the Chitwan Medical College Teaching Hospital in Bharatpur, Nepal. Internship placement at the hospital was every weekday from 7am to 1pm. During placement, we chose a

specific department for the week where we would speak with and ask questions to the doctors, nurses, and other staff while observing the day to day functioning of our chosen ward. We were sometimes able to help in small ways and perform tasks within our qualifications. As we built relationships with the staff in each department, we were able to learn more from them and were given more opportunities to be active in caring for and interacting with the patients. Though we were officially assigned only to one ward per week, we were able to visit several departments each day in order to obtain a better understanding of the work in a hospital as a whole. Since I was only there for three weeks, I made the most of my time by learning what time ward rounds were held in various departments and I attended as many rounds as possible each morning before going to my chosen rotation in the Emergency Room during the first two weeks. Since ward rounds were at different times in different departments, I was able to attend the daily morning ward rounds in Neurology/Neurosurgery, Cardiac Care Unit, and Orthopedics. After rounds I would often choose another department to spend an hour in before going to Emergency for the rest of the day. In this way I was able to get quality experience in a variety of wards throughout the hospital. Throughout my three weeks, I was able to gain valuable experience in the Ear, Nose and Throat office, the Pediatric ward, the surgical ward, the Tropical Disease ward, the Maternity ward, the Internal Medicine department, and the Psychiatry ward. The third and last week of my internship, I was able to be assigned to the Operating Theatre, so I spent my entire time at placement there each day. I have a special interest in becoming a surgeon, so this week was incredible for me as I was able to observe a myriad of different surgeries.

In addition to our placement at the hospital, each Wednesday the other interns and I would go to the Human Services Center after lunch for an hour and a half to play and socialize with the mentally disabled adults housed there. Every three weeks or so the interns could also volunteer at a weekend health camp in which they would accompany a team of doctors and nurses from the hospital who would travel by bus to a remote village and give basic medical care and check-ups to the villagers. Every other week, we also had the opportunity to lead health and hygiene classes at some grade schools throughout Bharatpur. Through these extracurricular medical activities, we were able to positively impact and interact more deeply with the larger community.

The main work of this internship was to allow international interns such as myself to gain valuable clinical experience in the unique setting Nepal provides as a developing country. It allowed us to obtain a vast amount of both general and working medical knowledge. The program provided the opportunity to experience working in a hospital, where we gained insight into Nepali healthcare and their medical education system. We were able to compare the Nepali systems to our own, and noting these differences supported dialogue between the interns ourselves in which we would often compare and contrast our own westernized healthcare and education systems. Overall, this internship encouraged a great deal of cultural exchange between both the interns and the Nepali people and between the interns themselves. Additional extracurricular activities and travel promoted by the program also acted to enhance the medical and cultural education aspects and provided a way for the interns to positively impact the local community.

**Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.**

At this internship I was joined by interns from all over the world, including; England, Wales, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, China, South Korea, and various states in the US. During my time at hospital placement, I had the unique opportunity to see and compare all aspects of the hospital in Nepal to my experiences and understanding of hospitals in the United States. I was also given the incredible opportunity to live with a local Nepali host family, where I experienced firsthand the daily life of an average Nepalese family and will now always have a place I can truly call home in Nepal. In addition to placement at the hospital, the other interns and I volunteered once per week at the local home for mentally disabled adults. We also held several health and hygiene education seminars at some local elementary schools, and one weekend went to a remote village to provide basic health care and routine check-ups to the villagers who do not normally have access to health care. These volunteer activities allowed us to give back to and more deeply connect with the local Nepali community from which we learned so much. We also had the opportunity to attend an anatomy class at the medical school where we were able to learn anatomy using human cadavers. I have yet to take an anatomy class, so this was an incredible experience because I was able to physically see all of the parts of the body which I have always learned about. I was especially in awe of the human brain because I found that I could recall all the complicated functions and deeper processing which I had just learned in my Introduction to Neuroscience class last semester. The feeling of satisfaction I had in being able to apply my studies to real life situations, both in the anatomy class and at the hospital, inspired me to want to study harder, gave real life meaning to my studies at Notre Dame, and strengthened my desire to go to medical school where I will learn even more applicable knowledge of human biology and medicine.

I gained an unbelievable amount of clinical experience, medical knowledge, and experiential knowledge of Nepali culture and Hindu and Buddhist religious/cultural practices. The program also offered various cultural activities such as weekly yoga, a trip to see the cremations at the nearby river according to Hindu custom, and the special opportunity to participate in the city's National Rice Planting Day festival where we learned about the staple grain and even got to help plant some rice. The cultural exchange between the interns and the Nepalese people both in the hospital and within our host families was not one sided. As they showed to us and explained the Nepalese culture and way of life, we in turn answered their questions and told them about our own ways of life. As much as I learned about the Nepali healthcare system and Nepalese culture in general, I learned just as much from my friendships with the other interns, who all brought their own unique cultural perspective and views on global issues. As we interacted throughout the internship and while traveling on the weekends, we had many in depth discussions of differences and similarities in politics, educational systems, and daily life in all the different countries represented by the present interns.

I truly believe that travel itself is one of the best teachers in the world. Someone can read about all the cultures and landscapes in the world, but until one actually physically experiences those cultures, landscapes, and activities, it is impossible to truly and fully understand our vast and complex world and the many ways in which other people live. Outside of the actual internship activities, I was able to travel throughout Nepal and have many life-changing experiences. Home of the Himalayas, Nepal is almost impossible to visit without doing some sort of trek. So

before my internship began, I trekked for two weeks to Everest Base Camp (5,364m), which is definitely one of the most physically challenging things I have ever done, but it was totally worth it. Through this I learned an incredible amount about the trekking and mountaineering world, as well as Nepal's tourism industry and the way of life of the villages in the Himalayas. While traveling with the other interns on the weekends, I explored the ancient Durbar Square markets and the Monkey Temple in Kathmandu and in Pokhara we had the amazing experiences of paragliding over the largest lake in Nepal and rappelling down a 150 ft. waterfall. Another weekend we went to Chitwan National Park where we canoed down a river full of crocodiles then trekked back through the jungle, seeing wild elephants and rhinos and learning about a myriad of other jungle wildlife. We even got to bathe the elephants in the riverside at the conservation center. Through all of these activities, I gained an incredible amount of experiential knowledge and a deeper understanding of Nepal's history which has shaped its present. Overall, this internship and the opportunities and experiences arising from it have given me an incredible new perspective and understanding of the world we live in and the many types of people and lifestyles that exist. Traveling always serves as good a reminder that despite all of our differences, we are all human and essentially the same. This internship and my entire trip to Nepal has been a life-changing experience which has inspired me to work and study harder, take nothing for granted, and to always hope for and work towards greater standards of living and healthcare as a human right for all people.

**Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.**

As a premedical student, it is no surprise that this medical internship through Projects Abroad is explicitly related to my intended career path of becoming a doctor, possibly a surgeon, with a special interest in global health work. This internship gave me unparalleled clinical experience and a unique insight into the inner workings of a typical hospital in an impoverished, developing nation and the career life of doctors and other hospital staff. My experiences allowed me to learn about many different medical specialties, which in turn helped me to realize which medical areas and specialties I would like to work in for my future career. My experiences in the Nepali healthcare system also gave me valuable material and ideas for possible research topics to use for my Poverty Studies Minor capstone project, which I will have to complete by the end of my senior year. This experience in global health has also pushed me to consider possibly pursuing the Masters of Science in Global Health Program at Notre Dame before entering medical school. Most importantly, this medical internship has solidified my decision to enter the medical field and has ignited a deeper passion for global health which has strengthened my desire to dedicate my career to working towards greater global health standards and access to affordable healthcare worldwide.

**What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?**

I would say that in these sort of internships you get out of them as much as you put in. You have to put yourself out there, talk to the doctors and nurses and ask them to explain what is going on. Otherwise you will end up just standing around in a ward waiting for placement to end as some volunteers did. The more you interact with the doctors, nurses, and other staff, the more you will learn and the time will fly by. I would also say it is best to try to learn the local language



