



Brazil 2015

On Saturday the 26th of September I arrived in Vila Velha in Brazil, the city where I would fulfill my internship in the hospital. I had no idea what to expect: how poor would the hospital be? What would be the skills of the doctor? What is their knowledge of medicine here? I was intending to see as much as possible and do as many physical examinations as they would allow me to do. My goal was to find out what the big differences are between the medical care in Brazil and the care in the Netherlands. Furthermore, I am very interested in different cultures and was very excited about getting to know a real Brazilian family and to explore the city.

My internship would take place in HEIMABA (Hospital Estadual Infantil e Maternidade Alzir Bernardino Alves), which is a public hospital for mothers and children. As it is a public hospital, the patients do not have to pay for the health care. Most patients are very poor and have poor hygiene, therefore it is not surprising that a lot of diseases manifested in HEIMABA correlate with this problem. The hospital itself seemed to be more developed than I expected, it even had a pediatric cardiac surgery department. During my internship I have seen many consultations and lectures, but I enjoyed the practical parts the most. The doctors and students, even the ones who do not speak English, are very helpful and they explain everything to you. One of the most special things for me was when I helped at a delivery and could hold the baby just after it was born and do all the measurements as if I was an obstetrician.

Besides my experiences in the hospital, I had a great time in the city Vila Velha too. At first, I could not believe this is the life they are living every day. The weather is so hot (the whole year long) and the beaches are only 5 meters away of their apartment. It seemed like I was on a holiday for the whole time. My host was such a nice person, she took me everywhere and showed me everything. The first weekend she took me to one of the biggest events for medical students: OREM, where sport teams of different universities play against each other and all the students are cheering for their own university. It was great to be part of this spectacle. The Brazilian culture is very warm and hospitable and everyone is very enthusiastic about foreign students. There was no social program organized by the IFMSA, but with the friends of my host and her brother, the students at the hospital and the other exchange student from Sudan I had a wonderful time!

During my internship I discovered many differences between the health care in Brazil and the Netherlands. There is a big gap between rich and poor people and they live separated lives. Only the poor people go to public hospitals where long waiting lists are the standard and the health care is not as good as in the private ones. Most of the medications are for free (for example diabetes medication, chemotherapy, antibiotics etc.) and when medication is too expensive the poor people have the opportunity to go to the judge, who can force the government to pay the expensive medications too. Besides that, it struck me to see that the Brazilians are not that strict with hygiene. They don't wash their hands every time before visiting a patient and during a cardiac surgery I attended the door was open all the time so



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everyone could walk in and out.

Brazil is one of the most amazing countries I have ever visited and I would recommend everyone to go there sometime. Meet the friendly people, taste their delicious food, feel welcome everywhere you go, listen to their country music and explore their incredible culture.

