

RETURNEE OF THE MONTH

NOVEMBER 2018



ABOUT ALYANAH CALATA

Program: UVA Nursing Exchange:
University of Auckland

Duration: Fall 2017

Major: Nursing

MOST INTERESTING CLASS & WHY?

My most interesting class was Mental Health and Disability. Because I was on a nursing exchange, I was taking all nursing courses and doing clinicals within the New Zealand healthcare system. It was interesting to see how Maori cultural practices were honored and utilized in mental health treatment and the accommodations and facilities available to carry out these practices. For example, for orientation to the mental health acute clinic we had to recite a Maori prayer and identify the key Maori principles in terms of delivering care: partnership, participation, and protection. I was truly honored to gain experience in cultural competency in a country that has learned from its mistakes in the past and strives to improve their healthcare system to reflect the needs of their people.



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HOW WAS EDUCATION ABROAD DIFFERENT THAN ANTICIPATED?

Clinicals are done very differently in New Zealand wherein instead of alternating days of the week between clinical and classroom-based learning, New Zealand utilizes a model where the nursing student spends 2-4 weeks in the classroom and then 6-10 weeks in clinical practice. It was nice to get so many hours of hand-on practice with clients and learning the healthcare system. It was nerve-racking at first; I felt I was thrust into an environment I had no experience or knowledge in. But by doing so I learned how intrinsic some of our learning is - in New Zealand they are taught about the treaty of waitangi and about the Maori people since elementary school. They can recite principles in their sleep, whereas I, a foreigner with no previous exposure had no base knowledge whatsoever. It made me realize how I, as an American, also have this sort of intrinsic knowledge that has been fed to me since I was a kid and how that knowledge presents itself as an adult and in university and in the way I deliver care. It really highlights how much knowledge you store as you age and gain experience.

NUMBER ONE WAY THE EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR GROWTH

I think with any sort of travel experience and exposure to new culture, you gain a new sense of awareness. For me, it opened my eyes to a better way mental health can be approached and how culture and our beliefs system can be positive parts of the healthcare system. I feel as though we often see belief systems, religion, culture, etc. as almost out of the norm in healthcare - it's something we have watch out for, a rare instance in an otherwise practiced routine of delivery of care. What I learned is that culture can serve as a way to create new standards in healthcare and it doesn't just benefit that sole individual but can also be a positive experience for people who have otherwise been exposed to that culture/belief system.



AUCKLAND IN 3 WORDS

Nature

Adventure

Culture

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FAVORITE LOCAL HANGOUT & WHY?

Shaky isles - very close to the university, best fries in town and delicious hot chocolate!

MOST INTERESTING/DELICIOUS CUISINE TRIED

New Zealand doesn't have much "unique" cuisine, but if you ever get the chance to go to the Tamaki Maori village you will get to experience a Hangi - a feast of food that is cooked in a pit under the ground. It includes a various selection of meats and vegetables.

MOST MEANINGFUL INTERACTION WITH A LOCAL

It turned out that the father of one of the nursing students I became friends with during my exchange was my aunts classmate in high school back in the Philippines! It was sweet to see that although we were from opposite sides of the globe that we could still have that common connection. It's a small world after all.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD?

New Zealand has been by far one of the best places I've ever travelled to. It has it all - culture, adventure, nature, landscapes. It's a beautiful culture full of kind, cheeky individuals. It has such a rich history. I miss it dearly. I found myself doing things me a year ago would have never thought of doing - like climbing over two waterfalls in a cave of glow worms, hiking for 8 hours in a frozen wonderland, and experiencing a culture that is close to my own people and heritage. You can't go wrong with New Zealand!

