

School of Nursing

Minnesota Nursing Magazine

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Notes from the Field

By Anna Terry

4 o' clock has become my favorite time of day here in Concepcion, Honduras, it is then that the thunderclouds that have been rumbling in the distance are directly overhead and out comes buckets of rain and sweet relief from the hot sun and humid sticky feeling that I've been wearing all day. Not only does the rainstorm provide temporary respite from the heat but the rain pounding down on the tin roof ceases all communication and forces everyone to be silent with their thoughts for the moments at least while the strongest part of the storm passes. I relish in this moment of relative silence, reflect on the day and what is to come. I've been lucky to have a had variety of experiences here so far, a few days in the clinic, some time at the high school and at the health center, doing home visits, helping with 'field clinics'... a health fair.



We started the trip in the high schools doing a general health screening, height, weight, blood pressure, anemia tests and a short 'diet, exercise and 'sex, drugs and rock n roll chat (except instead of rock n roll insert, cumbia, salsa or reggaeton). At the end of each individual session I'd ask the student if they had any questions...they ranged from, "Is Lipton tea addicting?" To.."what exactly changes in a girls body after she has sex?" To..."is it true that in America they are going to put micro chips in everyone's arm in order to see the doctor?" (maybe?!) "Can you teach me English so I can go live with my mom/dad in the states?"

Many nights I've been in the clinic working on my chart reviews, sometimes alone and sometimes with patients around. One night, I was working with my headlamp because the power was out, when Don, the night guard came in to chat, we talked beans and corn and pigs until I had to get up to swap out more charts and as I turned my light caught the legs of a big black animal on top of the file cabinet...tarantula! I screamed, it looked like a Halloween prop, massive, hairy, terrifying...the guard looked over and said, "oh, a spider", and went to get the broom.

Another night, I sat with a mother of 10 that was with her daughter who had just given birth to a healthy little boy. I asked if the father would be coming, she said no, the father had left her daughter with bruises and one too many headaches. " So I had to tell her, just throw him out. I explained it like this...those men are like the garbage, you sweep it up and toss it out and never bring it back, I mean, would you bring back the trash and throw it all over your floor? No! and that's what it's like with that man, he's out. "I'm lucky, she went on to say...my husband has no vices, he doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke and he is a hard worker, many people tell me I'm lucky, it's true." I wondered how her daughter felt about her comparing her baby's father to trash and if it had actually been that easy to leave.

The roads to one of my interviews was the most rugged I've experienced, more of a cattle trail up a mountain side, we bumped along at 5 mph until we landed at a rural school where a community health volunteer was to meet us...he showed up minutes later, having just come in from the fields, he was wielding a machete, rubber boots and a torn t shirt. We sat in two desk chairs under an awning at the school, by the end of the interview a whole class of children had encircled us, staring, giggling, 'reading' over my shoulder but the interviewee and the teacher didn't seem to mind so who was I to suggest some privacy? I giggle now too as I listen to the recording complete with laughter and school girl whisperings.

In my last week I'll be finishing up with interviews, enjoying my fill of fresh corn tortillas, beans and fruit, taking in the beautiful green mountain vistas and soaking up a few more 4 o' clock rain showers before returning to the hustle and bustle this last semester is sure to bring.

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