

Unique experience for me as for physical therapist

Profession



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Ever since I was young, I have sought to diversify my experiences and gain new perspectives on the world we live in. Growing up in a small, suburban town, everything was always the same from the people I interacted with to the places I ate and shopped. My lack of change in my young life fueled an intense desire to meet new people and have new experiences, which has only grown throughout high school and college. Hearing the stories and reasons that shape an individual's perspective on various situations allows me to understand how they came to be the person they are. Serving on mission trips and studying abroad twice has provided me unique opportunities to work with individuals whose lives are drastically different from my own, which has given me values that will allow me to become a compassionate and understanding physical therapist.

Throughout the course of high school, I served on six mission trips working with underprivileged, Native American children and serving in their communities. My first year going was quite possibly one of the worst years that I experienced. I broke my wrist early on in the trip and lost consciousness as a result. There were no doctors for hours because the area we were in was incredibly remote. So, I was not able to see a doctor until I returned home a week later. Yet, my passion for serving the community kept me coming back for the next five trips. Over the course of a few years, we were able to assist in the construction of a new kids camp for their community. The community members that we worked with taught me how to incorporate others' perspectives with my own in order to work towards a common goal. My experiences on these trips allowed me to find value in

working with those from different backgrounds and who share different ideas, which grew my desire experience and work with other cultures.

As physical therapy becomes more interdisciplinary, it is essential that physical therapists have the skills to work with and treat those with all different backgrounds. During my study abroad programs specifically, I had the opportunity to work with students from all around the globe who each contributed their unique perspectives to our tasks during class. In Berlin, I studied at an international school where the only common language many of us had was German, which none of us were fluent in. I was able to grow my communication skills through finding unique ways to communicate and solve problems with my classmates. Additionally, I learned about the differences between the American and European education systems. I gained an appreciation for my own culture after hearing about and experiencing ones that were different from my own. In working with my classmates who came from completely different backgrounds, I learned how culture can impact every aspect of life.

Despite my programs revolving around subjects other than healthcare, I still received some exposure to foreign healthcare during both of my programs. In Germany, I was able to see the differences between their emergency room and the emergency rooms in the United States. They had far fewer staff members, but also fewer people in the waiting rooms. In Italy, I had the opportunity of experiencing the function of a typical clinic due to many members on my program becoming sick. They're privacy policies were much more relaxed than in America and even their physical exams are different. Physical therapy is constantly evolving with revolutionary changes in

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technology and research. Experiencing other forms of health care has driven me to embrace future changes coming within the profession.

My study abroad programs in both Germany and Italy exposed me to various environments of which I was unfamiliar. Even something as simple as ordering a cup of coffee was different. Traveling to many new countries, speaking a foreign language, and taking foreign coursework required a great amount of adaptability. We would not have daily homework and often would have a single paper or exam determining the entire grade for the course. This required me to take more responsibility for my learning outside of the classroom and collaborate with others in order to succeed in my courses. Physical therapy requires dealing with a great amount of uncertainty when deciding the best course of treatment and method of pain management for a patient. Although it may not seem like it at first glance, studying abroad is quite analogous to physical therapy. I spent months working hard to understand the different aspects of life in foreign countries and adapting my lifestyle to fit the lifestyle of my host country. In my future career, I will need to adapt my treatments to fit the individual needs of my patients. As a DPT student and a future physical therapist, I will use my well-developed skills in adaptability to change and working in new situations in order to share a unique perspective with my fellow students and improve the quality of care for my patients.