From Maria Gomez, Senior, St. David’s School of Nursing Student

“I am grateful that I got to experience this trip because I think that I will be a better nurse because of what I have learned!”

What kinds of experiences did you have in both countries?

The countries were absolutely beautiful, and the thing that enhanced the beauty were the people. When we held the clinicals, the people were so grateful for any medical care that we could offer them. In both countries, I had somebody thank me for coming to help them and tell me that we were like angels. It is so humbling to be able to help those in need when you know that they would not get these assessments or medications without people coming to serve them.

A discussion that I had with one of the translators was about how Costa Rica was more developed than most other countries in the Central America. They had many Nicaraguans coming over to Costa Rica because the opportunity to gain health insurance from a job in Costa Rica was more likely. When we walked around doing the census in the community that we were assigned in Costa Rica, there were many native Nicaraguans living there. It is in understanding the needs of people trying to make a better life for themselves and their families that we can begin to understand the diversity of the American culture as well.

In Nicaragua, the hospital that we saw was definitely a step back in time from our current standards in the United States. The equipment and supplies that they have are limited, but these medical professionals do the best with what they have.

What was the one thing that impressed you the most of all that you saw and did?

The doctors’ relationships with the patients! Dr. Conrado and Dr. Orlando, from Nicaragua, explained it in this sense: The United States has wonderful technology that helps doctors diagnose and treat the patients’ needs. In Nicaragua, they do not have that technology available so the best way to treat a patient is to assess them, understand their complaints, know their history, and most importantly develop rapport with that patient so that the patient feels comfortable explaining their illnesses, so that you can diagnose and treat them.

Why do you feel this was an important trip/experience?

It is a humbling experience. It makes you appreciate what you have, but most importantly it makes you realize the need to help others. As nurses, we are always going to be dealing with people in vulnerable positions because our patients are ill. The patients who were seeking our care were so thankful that we were there to help them, but I am grateful to them for teaching me to appreciate every one of my patients that I see as a nurse. No matter how big or small my patient’s issues may be, I am always going to try to understand where my patient is coming from because that will help me understand where my patient is, and it will help me to guide my patient to where they need to go.
Why do you feel this enhanced your nursing education?

It is putting it all together. We had the opportunity to assess patients, and determine their main complaint, and decide what information we needed to give the doctor. We also got the opportunity to collaborate with the doctors on the care for the patients. In Costa Rica, we (the 13 students) had the opportunity to collaborate together with our leader and the doctors to run the clinic the way that we thought would be the most effective. We (the students) set up the clinic into different stations, and it worked! We set a record for the number of patients seen in 1 day for our leader. It was 40 patients! It was just exciting to know that we could work together, come up with a plan, and succeed in the end!