

Births, Births & More Births

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Hey everyone!

My name is Erica Fuller and I am halfway through my internship at Manos Abiertas in Ciudad Vieja, Guatemala. Birth season is in full swing here. I have assisted in two births thus far and we have had three in the past week. All the babies and mothers have been healthy and happy. I was lucky and helped with the two quicker labors, but we just had one that went over a day. We have one pending right now so the clinic is bustling with people while we all wait for that first cry.

I have learned so much in my time here. I definitely accomplished my learning objectives. In my five weeks in Guatemala, I have learned not only the stages of labor and how to monitor the mother and baby safely throughout the process, but also the struggles of obtaining adequate prenatal, family planning and gynecological care in Guatemala and the extra obstacles -financial and educational- that low-income families face. My Spanish has improved greatly during my time in Guatemala. I now can understand prenatal classes and appointments with few questions afterwards and feel more comfortable conversing with the patients. I have been able to compare and contrast the differences between women's health back in the United States and Guatemala as well as hear the reasoning for the differences. My time with Manos Abiertas has let me grow in so many ways.

Currently, I am pitching a few projects to my supervisor. I would like to make a Q&A sheet on Zika for mothers as this continues to be an issue and becomes more present in Guatemala and I would like to work on a nutrition poster for the waiting room to address a educational gap I have seen in patients.

My internship at Manos Abiertas has taught me to grow as a leader by letting me advocate for women and their rights in healthcare. It has shown me how women are not always consulted or properly educated on their health in Guatemala and the problems that causes. This has inspired me to get involved in educating women and spreading the reach of Manos Abiertas and its wonderful work.

I still have lots more to learn and do in my remaining weeks at Manos Abiertas, but my time thus far has already given me knowledge and passion that will shape my future career in health. I can't wait to see what the next few weeks bring!