Callie Hansen

Thailand

Life After Study Abroad
During medical school, I studied abroad in Bangkok, Thailand (UW Global Health, summer 2009) with a group of other medical, nursing, pharmacy, and public health students. We spent time learning about the public health system in Thailand, as well as living with host families in a small village where we researched public health issues important to the local community. I went on to graduate medical school in 2012, and have since moved to Washington, DC. I am working as a pediatric resident at Inova Children's Hospital in Fairfax, VA, treating the spectrum of pediatric patients living in and visiting our nation's capital.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career
With the current changes in the U.S. health care system and the ongoing debate over how to improve our nation’s public health, having not only studied other systems of health care delivery, but actually seeing them in action, has been invaluable. Because of my abroad experience, I’ve been able to better understand the current changes as well as talk on a more informed basis on the effects of these changes that I’ve personally seen. Also, working in DC, I see patients from diverse backgrounds on a daily basis. The cultural awareness that I gained while abroad has been an extremely valuable skill to understanding and treating my patients.

A Favorite Memory from Abroad
I have a number of things that come to mind - from three dollar all-you-can-eat, to hiking up a waterfall, but I think I can pick out a favorite. While staying with a host family in rural Thailand, another student and I were getting ready for bed when we turned toward the door, and sitting on the wall was a several inch long spider! We pulled out language guidebooks and tried our hardest to sound out the word spider, but it wasn't until we drew a picture of an 8-legged spider that we were able to be understood. That's when our host mother pulled a large spray can out from the cabinet, walked over, and began chasing the spider around the room while spraying at it. The spider ran around the room, across the bed, up the other wall - and believe me, there was some shrieking - and finally out the window. We slept a little worse that night, and I will never forget the largest spider I have ever seen.

Advice for Returning Students
You can't predict all of the ways your abroad experience will be useful. I find myself looking back and referencing my trip more often than I could have expected. I find myself referencing the health care system and cultural differences on a regular basis - something I never would have guessed if you asked me ahead of time!

Interview from February 2014