

## Alexia D'Arconso, Nursing Placement

I'm a second year student nurse at City University London and I've been to Uganda with Soapbox Trips/Act4Africa in March. This was truly one of the most amazing opportunities I've had the chance to experience and it was a huge learning curve not only for my nursing, but also about a different culture and myself. I chose to go to Jinja for my elective placement as I wanted to see first hand something other than the UK and I thought that going abroad, not only would give me a different perspective on the nursing profession, but it also would expose me to cultural and social differences which can greatly contribute to my growth both as a nurse and an individual. I was definitely happy and satisfied with the trip and I can say that all of my expectations were met and exceeded.

Firstly me and another fellow student nurse were staying at a local doctor's house, who made us feel at home and welcome from the moment we set foot into his house. William was extremely knowledgeable and would always be willing to explain and discuss with us the different things that we did/saw in practice, which I think is a great asset to this experience since I had very limited knowledge of tropical diseases and being able to discuss these with him was of incredible educational value. I definitely feel that I improved my understanding of different conditions and their treatment thanks to this.

The hospital was, of course, very different from anything that I had ever experienced before. Luckily I was not completely unprepared for it, so the ward overcrowding, the lack of resources, lack of staffing and general management of the patients did not come as a shock to me. Regardless, it was not easy. It was not easy to accept that patients would just die of dehydration or diabetic ketoacidosis, or that patients would have to go back home because they cannot afford to buy the drugs, the gloves, the needles, the gauze, etc. It was heart breaking to see people suffering and being utterly unable to do anything about it. Another thing that I found challenging was the attitude of doctors and nurses towards the patients, sometimes handling the person as if they were a piece of meat and I found the lack of communication quite hard to understand. Not to mention the fact that no consent was ever sought or explanation offered! So that was quite hard to witness, especially when we are taught (rightfully) to consider the individual as an independent human being regardless of their condition/symptoms.

I didn't have the expectation of going there to make a difference, because, after all what do I know, I'm still just a student nurse and I have a long way to go, however I loved every second of this placement. I feel very grateful that such an experience was made available to me. I learnt to appreciate the luxury of free health care, resources, and simply how accessible it is to virtually anyone that needs medical/nursing attention. It was hard to see people struggling, being in pain, suffering, losing the loved ones took a lot out of me and it gave me perspectives on nursing from a different angle. It is definitely not an experience just for everyone, however, even though it was at times challenging, it does give back a lot in terms of personal and professional growth.

Thank you to everyone that made this possible especially to Shaun and Kathy, Martin, William and Zai.