



After the very busy cultural day learning about traditional medicine of the Mayans and touring the botanical gardens, we returned to our lodge in San Ignacio to prepare for clinic next day. Several hours was spent with colleagues organizing medical and admin kits, training, bagging medications and preparing our formulary for clinic. Our tired bodies experienced both cultural and professional immersion. We got a break learning how to make chocolate the Mayan way, all natural (without milk and sugar), drink of the gods (as the Mayans called it 😊)



Working at the clinic was exhilarating! I manned the vital station with another colleague, and we were the first clinical stop for every patient, and it was great to connect with patients, many young mothers and their babies. Our ability to take their height, weight and BMI helped triage them through the rest of the clinic, many needed foot checks and almost all needed education on nutrition, healthy living to prevent diabetes and heart disease. It will be great to provide sexual education due to high number of mothers in their late teens with one to two children under age 5 meaning many started having babies around age 16 years old! Focusing on prevention through testing and education was rewarding since after we leave, they can sustain what we have shared with them to prevent costly health problems such as diabetes and hypertension, hopefully our efforts made a difference in their lives

Clinic was the highlight of my day! I enjoyed the hard work tied to setting up, facilitating care and connecting with the villagers, very rewarding for me indeed and sad we didn't have more clinic hours.



Second best experience today was the FOOD! I don't know why anyone will love western food more than the traditional food shared with us at the Lodge, dinner was extraordinary, and the cultural exhibition of Marimba was an amazing blend of culture through music, dance and of course the amazing Mayan tacos we ate!

The second day of clinic was much smoother than yesterday, and I enjoyed setting up the children's corner (the kids loved it!) and participating in house visits with multi-generation families educating them on nutrition and diabetes education, doing foot checks and spending time with families. This is one area we fall short in the US, home visits are so critical to healthcare system planning as so much happens to our patients after they leave our facilities

and how they live (eat, habits, culture and general way of life) affects their overall health evidence in the lives of the folks we visited with.

Connecting with total strangers in their homes felt like an awesome responsibility and at the same time felt like healthcare 'evangelism' taking care to people instead of waiting for them to come to us as broken, sick people. I had a reawakening of my purpose in healthcare and the need to help redesign delivery through the lens of culture, prevention and patient education. I felt like my purpose in healthcare is to help prevent disease and provide infrastructure for patients to live their best lives possible in their own environment



The hospital tour was equally amazing and great way to start the day. Led by the lead RN of the facility, the outpatient side of the San Ignacio community hospital was well laid out from registration to clinical areas. Something I took away as new knowledge was the over emphasis on patient education that even the artwork on the wall had meaning to the patients instead of artwork for the sake of art. They used visual art, publications, tons of signage and posters to drive home the message of prevention. They even had doors pulled to the side to eliminate the risk of infection through constant door opening (something we can copy in the US especially during flu season). The facility was also designated a "baby friendly" facility and evidence of high patient engagement was seen in the maternity ward wherein emphasis on breast feeding was posted everywhere. The nurses we spoke with also shared the impact of native medicine to the lives of mothers and their willingness to partner with midwives to stem the trend of increasing deaths in young mothers due to taking concoctions for labor and delivery without supervision

This day was amazing visiting the St Herman's cave after the hospital tour (glad this was the order of the day), the cave as with the Mayan's ruins seemed so sacred to me and Dr Johnson's retelling the allegory of the cave provided ample introspection on the meaning of reality versus perception and how we address life. This cave represents so much more to me based on the ancient culture that used it, the missionaries that visited it and the impact it has on the people who live around it, represents the longevity of nature through man's evolution. The long trek to the cave and subsequently to the small lake (I didn't swim this time) was very rewarding and relaxing connecting with nature

The cave experience brought me so much life and repurposing of me and my 'why' in healthcare, the environment was both powerful and humbling as human beings are not as smart as nature and as one of my colleagues mentioned all the "answers" already exist in the divine nature of earth if we will only pay attention.