IU Nursing Teams Travel to Nicaragua

This summer, the IUPUI School of Nursing sent a delegation of five students to Posoltega, Nicaragua, which has been the international sister city of Bloomington, IN since 1989.

Although students from IUB have visited Posoltega frequently to participate in eye-care missions and seed distribution projects, this is the first year IUPUI has sent a group to Nicaragua.

Amy Beckleberg, a senior nursing student at the time of this summer’s trip and a member of the 1996 IUB nursing team that traveled to Nicaragua, arranged for the nursing team to join the Posoltega-Bloomington program. In preparation for the summer 1998 trip, team members met once every other week for six months to plan the program, practice Spanish, and develop team rapport.

Team members developed three primary goals for their visit: to develop a collaborative relationship with Nicaraguan nurses, to provide prenatal education, and to participate in a multi-sector effort to improve health.

While in Posoltega, the IUPUI/IUB nursing team presented five maternal and child health education seminars to a number of local midwives and health care volunteers known as brigadistas. The seminars addressed subjects such as common prenatal discomforts and methods of relief, warning signs of prenatal complications, fetal growth and development, pre- and postnatal nutrition, and methods of stress management for better emotional health.

Staff at the local health care center arranged tours of the two major state hospitals for the visiting nursing team. “It was sobering to view hospital rooms that often have as many as 10 patients, no curtains, and to learn that, at times, two laboring women must share one bed,” Becklenberg said.

The nursing team also traveled to a rural mountain village where they helped administer immunizations, weigh babies, and distribute birth control, while local nurses gave a presentation on family planning.

While in Posoltega, the nursing students stayed with local families, which Becklenberg believes was “a greater learning opportunity,” especially for those who did not speak Spanish.

Mary Beth Riner, lecturer for the Department of Environments for Health, accompanied the nurses to Nicaragua. “Students found this two-and-a-half week experience to provide positive experiences in traveling abroad to an Hispanic culture and working as a team with nursing and health professionals in a rural Latin American country,” Riner said. “I truly enjoyed assisting students who were willing to step out of their comfort zone and extend themselves on others’ behalf,” she added.

—Jenny Montgomery

Photo courtesy: IUPUI School of Nursing

Patty Maberhaus, IUPUI senior nursing major, immunizes a local patient during her team’s summer travels in Nicaragua.