



## **Guatemala: International Experience Exceeding Respiratory Care**

Presenter: Kimberly Cameron Poirier, SRT

September 16, 6:30 PM Eastern

### **Session Abstract**

Thirteen third year respiratory therapy students and three staff from Fanshawe College participated in an International Medical Mission trip to Antigua, Guatemala in June 2019. The participants were divided among four community clinics in nearby regions where they assisted with various tasks such as patient assessment, geriatric care, dental care, and staff education. Some challenges participants experienced included language barriers present between participants and local staff and patients as well as lack of access to equipment and medications. Through participation in this experience students were able to develop an understanding of health care in developing countries as well as a newfound appreciation for the equipment, supplies and services we have access to in Canada. Students have also learned to be more patient when dealing with difficult patients or situations and how to have compassion for patients with varying backgrounds and social or economical circumstances. This experience has allowed students to be more conscious of their waste and the way they interact and communicate within their clinical practice. Not only did participants have the chance to experience health care system from a different perspective but they also had the opportunity to explore the country and culture itself. Participants took part in a hike up a volcano, a visit to Mayan Ruins, visits to the local market and a kayak and hiking day trip to the lake. All participants felt this experience was extremely valuable and similar opportunities should be explored by students and professionals within the profession as it has had such a positive influence in their practice.

### **Session Objectives**

1. To learn about some of the differences in treatment and patient care experienced in Guatemala compared to in Canada.
2. To learn about the impact international clinicians have on community health care teams in developing countries.
3. To discuss some of the experiences had by Fanshawe students who participated in the mission and what they took away from the experience.
4. To discuss opportunities for international clinical experiences.

### **Speaker Biography**

Kimberly is a Graduate Respiratory Therapist who recently graduated from the Respiratory Therapy program at Fanshawe College and has started her career in the home care field. Kimberly has always had an interest in the health care sector and patient care and began her education in Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa before making the transition to the Respiratory Therapy program. Kimberly was one of thirteen students chosen to participate in a medical mission trip to Antigua, Guatemala in June 2019.