



A Volunteer's Perspective from a mission trip to St. Vincent



The sound of the chorus rang throughout the country side of a small, rural town resounding off the sides of the houses close by. Many of the words were the same or at least similar to those I knew from my church back at home. However, the intensity in the congregation's eyes and the fervor in their words were worlds apart from what I was accustomed. Interestingly enough, we were not in a church, but a medical clinic beginning another day of ministering both spiritually and physically to the local population of Saint Vincent.

Some had begun lining up to be seen by the "American" physicians before 4'o clock in the morning showing no outward signs of fatigue or impatience. It was almost as if the simple hymns they sang in unison were revitalizing their spirits and giving them the strength to wait a bit longer. Our group of 7 FSU pre-health students, 2 physicians, and 2 nurses still needed to set up the clinic in preparation for spending at least a few minutes with each one of the 130 people that we would see over the course of the day.

I remember very distinctly the fear in the eyes of my fellow students as they manned stations they had only prepared for in the very controlled environment of Tallahassee. Their preparation and adaptability was about to be tested and, having no prior patient/provider interaction, they would soon gain invaluable insight into what medicine once was before being complicated by technology and the desire to turn a profit. Before my eyes, each student transformed into an integral component of the well-oiled machine that would be required to reach as many people as possible in the short amount of time we had. All were needed to greet the patients, take their vital signs, assist the doctors, fill prescriptions, and eventually see the patients out on the other side with careful instructions on lifestyle and habits that would have a lasting effect.

I was amazed each night at our debriefings when the students shared about their experiences. The doctors and nurses couldn't believe how well we all worked together as if we had been friends for years. Each student grew tremendously over the course of the week and has made memories that will last them well into their careers as future physicians and healthcare providers. My team returned safely from our excursion to Saint Vincent and I know from their expressions and the manner in which they talk to others about the trip, that each has been touched in a profound and lasting way. Moreover, the 393 lives of those we educated and encountered in our four, short days on the island will hopefully have been improved more than we will ever know.

A special thanks to CAMEO and its executive board, the doctors and nurses who traveled with us, and our contacts on Saint Vincent for their support and facilitation of our experience abroad and its importance in our training.

With the hope that this ministry will continue to bless the lives of countless college students to come.

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