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Smith '14 Works as Midwifery Intern in Africa

Aug. 19, 2014

Even though she had previously observed healthcare in a developing country, Illinois Wesleyan University **nursing** alumna Hannah Smith '14 (Monticello, Ill.) was startled to see patients' vital signs documented on a scrap of paper during an internship in Tanzania.

Smith spent three weeks this summer as a midwifery intern at Mount Meru Regional Hospital in Arusha, a city of 1.2 million people in Tanzania, through Work the World. The organization provides healthcare students with hospital placements in Africa, Asia and South America.

Smith's interest in international healthcare began in 2010 when she helped with earthquake relief on a medical mission trip to Haiti. Two years later she worked in a hospital in Barcelona while studying abroad through the **IWU Spain Program**. After graduating, Smith wanted to continue her observations of international healthcare systems.

Because Smith had already passed the NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) for registered nurses, she was able to work as an RN in Tanzania. Smith's job duties included checking dilation, checking the position of the fetus and using a Pinard horn stethoscope to listen for fetal heart rates. Witnessing over 40 births over the course of her internship, Smith performed eight deliveries independently and worked as the nurse in three cesarean sections.

"What I liked most about my internship placement were the experiences that I would not likely see in the United States," said Smith. These experiences included observing an infant whose mother had contracted rubella while pregnant, and helping a midwife during a vaginal breech surgery. Working with unique medical situations gave her more confidence in her abilities as a nurse and a new perspective on healthcare around the world.

"Being immersed in a culture where fetal heart tones are taken only every four to six hours on a woman in labor and documentation is done on a scrap of paper helped me grow to appreciate the charting and standards that we have in the United States," said Smith.

Her current plans include obtaining a position on a labor or delivery unit in the U.S., and eventually earning a doctorate in nurse midwifery and women's health. Smith said she also hopes to work abroad again in the future.



Hannah Smith '14

By Danielle Kamp '15