Reflections on Internship

San Miguel de Allende

The internship started on June 21st and ended on August 15th. This length of time allowed for a detailed experience that is not easily forgotten. San Miguel de Allende is a town designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site that is situated in Guanajuato, a central state of México. Being centrally located and given its proximity to México City and Guadalajara, it makes for a great touristic destination. Many tourists, especially Americans dominate the central area of the town where everything is more expensive and gringo. Many expats tend to retire here as well and stream a constant stream of revenue into the local economy. Despite the influence of foreigners, the city at its base still has not lost its Méxican charm.

The organization CASA, El Centro para los Adoloscentes de San Miguel de Allende, is an amazing place to intern. Their program has a long history and was founded in 1984 after seeing a need of sexual health education. The rate of death in childbirth was stunning at the time so programs expanded to include a school of midwifery. This has had a profound effect on the surrounding region. Other programs include a school/daycare, theatre, radio broadcasting, sexual education, violence prevention, and physical health/nutrition. I worked with their physical health program also known as PSC, Promotores de Salud Comunitaria.

After an initial two week period of seeing all of the different programs, I settled into the nutrition program and was able to travel to different communities every day, while being able to return every few weeks. Usually, I’m not one to be apologetic for the policies of the United States, but after seeing how Coca-Cola was literally more widespread in communities than water,
I became a lot more doubtful about the benefits of uninhibited capitalism. Although, these communities did not have much of a choice in the availability of processed products, the decision was handed down. That is not to say that there isn’t anything to be done. Education on the dangerous health effects of overconsumption of artificially sweetened and processed food may be able to reverse the trend. In practice, this was a lot easier said than done, often less than a day later you could see people going back to the same unhealthy practices. I have found that suggesting small changes over time can be the best way to change eating practices. These changes, whether something as small as removing candies or getting into Zumba as a form of daily/weekly exercise can become sustainable. It is especially disheartening to see this as an ever increasing inequality between well-financed urban communities and their poorer more rural counterparts. It is a difference that is seen even in the early stages of life. Children as young as 8 years of age are seeing their peers being placed into categories such as overweight and obese.

Overall, it was a very informative experience, and I believe I was able to give back in return even by simply being there and being someone very different from what’s typical. I sincerely believe that one day a solution for many of these issues will be found and reduce the global trend of obesity.