



Community for Children: Professional Development Pre-rotation Preparation and Questions for Reflection

The *Community for Children* rotation is unique in many respects. Since it is not a clinical rotation, the curriculum incorporates unique opportunities for participants to expand themselves both professionally *and* personally. To that end, a *professional development* component is an integral part of the experience. Our intention is to allow you time to reflect on your decision to become a physician, what kind of physician you want to be, and how you will stay true to your dreams during the challenging years ahead.

The overarching mission of this rotation is to create a world of hope for the poorest and most vulnerable of our children. In order to achieve the goals and objectives inherent in this mission, participants are offered rich opportunities to engage in a variety of community and cultural experiences. Every day, you will encounter people whose language, values, affect, economics, religion, norms and politics may be very different from your own. You may encounter situations in which health care delivery does not match your own experience in some way. As a result, this rotation is certain to elicit a variety of reactions within you and your fellow participants.

During the rotation, you will also have free time and interpersonal interactions that provide the opportunity to learn more about yourself, encouraging you to reflect upon your experiences as well as your reactions to them. These four weeks hold great potential for exploring material that will have definite meaning for you, in terms of action, integration, and closure. In this regard, previous participants have reported a variety of reactions, ranging from delight, fascination, and engaged learning to sadness, surprise, confusion and even irritation. They also reported that the opportunity for personal reflection was deeply enriching and helped them focus on that which is most important in their lives. In other words, there is potential for this experience to be life-altering in some way.

Shakespeare urged us to live an examined life and to act on our inner callings: “This, above all, to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as night the day, thou canst not be false to any man.” In other words, to know and understand yourself is the basis of personal and professional behavior as well as ethical understanding. To that end, this portion of the rotation provides you with an opportunity to check in with your heart, your values, and your affinities.

How does this contribute to your goal of being a better physician? The answer is simple, though not necessarily easy. Here is the simple part: the human psyche seeks balance. The intellect seeks understanding. The emotions are activated all the time, whether we are aware of it or not. And the more self-aware we can become in the midst of this, the better able we are to respond.

The hard part is that physicians and medical students are expected to be alert, efficient, effective and knowledgeable *all of the time*. Within that paradigm, there may be little time or energy left for taking care of one's own needs. When one is expected to have it all together and to focus primarily on the care of others, there can be a loss of connectedness to oneself.

To facilitate this process, we will offer suggestions to help you structure your reflection time, with a focus on personal meaning and your own sense of direction. You will be encouraged to observe yourself as you move through your various experiences. For example, what is it like to be immersed in a strange situation? How do you typically adapt to the unusual or uncomfortable? What are your reactions in the face of poverty or lack of services? How do you recognize your own affinities or discomforts (in your body, your thoughts, or your emotions)? How do you recognize what these reactions are trying to tell you? Ultimately, you will be invited to identify what aspects of this program call you to action. Or conversely, which ones you find of little interest.

At the beginning of the rotation, we will discuss this in further detail and answer any questions you might have.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

As part of the rotation, we encourage each of you to take time for personal reflection. The following questions are offered as *examples* of how you may want to utilize the time. The benefit of these questions lies in the fact that there are no right or wrong answers to any of them. There are only *your answers*.

Some of the questions may feel more relevant to you than others. Or they may bring up your own unique forms of inquiry. That's the whole point.

- 1. What story (incident, feeling, etc.) do you most want to remember from this experience?**

- 2. What has touched you most deeply?**

- 3. Has anything been particularly painful for you during this time?**

- 4. What personal gifts do you bring to the missions of *creating a world of hope for the poorest and most vulnerable of our children*?**

- 5. When you get home, with whom do you want to discuss this experience? When and how can you tell your story?**

- 6. How can you integrate your experience and insights into your ongoing development as a physician?**

- 7. What three words best describe the kind of doctor you want to be?**