

The Gringa Goes to Chile

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Objectives:

1. The participant will be able to identify one difference between the health care system in Chile and in the United States.
2. The participant will be able to describe one difference between the role of the nurse in Chile and in the United States.

Summary:

This presentation will focus on the four weeks I spent as a Voluntaria de Salud at the Consultorio Urzúa, Peñalolen, Chile. My goals in going to Chile were simple. First and foremost I wanted to improve my Spanish skills, and secondly I wanted to volunteer and function within their society. How I got there and what happened was serendipitous and just plain lucky. Initially, I was set to volunteer in a friend of a friend's dental office. Dr. Julio Abelleira, the dentist, had been the director of the Consultorio in Peñalolen and was now a town Councilman. I believe it was his idea to send me to the Consultorio as a volunteer. This had never been done before. He assigned a woman, who turned out to be my guardian angel, to orient and introduce me to the staff. I was brought to meet Dr. Abelleira just hours after I arrived and then began my adventure the very next day. I had remarkable access. What I hadn't expected was that I was being viewed as representing my country and culture. Before long I was known as "the Gringa".