Anesthesia education and practice in Peru

By Narda Lyons, SRNA
Peru demographics

- Population: 32,551,815
- Capital: Lima
  - Lima is the most populated Department in Peru with an estimated population of almost 10 million people
- Language: Spanish is the official language
  - Quechua and Aymara are examples of some indigenous languages that predominate in certain areas of Peru
Lima-Peru

- Originally inhabited by indigenous groups under the Inca Empire in the 15th century. Spanish Conquistadors took over the Incan empire in 1532. Peru did not gain independence from Spanish invaders until 1821.

- Lima is the second most populous city in South America.

- It is the country’s economic center being responsible for more than two-thirds of Peru’s industrial production.
Purpose of the experience

📍 The purpose of traveling to Lima, Peru was to have the opportunity to learn anesthesia techniques that are used in that country as well as to gain more cultural experience.

📍 The experience also allowed me to obtain data from anesthesia residents to complete my capstone project.
National Institute of Neoplastic Illnesses (INEN) is a teaching medical facility that specializes in the treatment of cancer in Lima.

It offers various services including surgical services.

Anesthesia services provided at INEN are not only in the operating rooms (ORs), but also include non-OR sites such as MRI, pediatric unit, burn unit.
The experience

- I had the opportunity to stay at INEN to learn about their anesthesia practices for 5 days. Monday through Friday.

- During my stay at INEN, a typical shadowing day in the OR would start at 0630 AM with a one-hour case conference. Scheduled OR cases would start at 0730 AM. OR cases would mostly be finished between 1600 and 1700.

- Case-conferences during my stay were provided by faculty members from MD Anderson who were visiting INEN at the same time.
The OR
Typical anesthesia set-up

Anesthesia machine
Note that laryngoscopes are labeled with the resident’s name. Each resident receives two different blades and a handle at the beginning of their program. It is their responsibility not to lose their blades or handle as this is all they get for the whole program to perform their cases.
Cotton balls soaked in alcohol = alcohol wipes.

Surgical drapes are not disposable

Small cooler for blood in every OR
During my stay at INEN, I learned that anesthesiologists are the sole anesthesia providers in Peru. There are no other anesthesia programs such as nurse anesthesia programs in Peru.

Anesthesia residency involves a 3-year program to become an anesthesiologist.

Anesthesia practice is very similar in terms of the medications that are used in Peru. They use the same inhalation agents that would be used in the United States such as sevoflurane or isoflurane. They also use the same induction agents for anesthesia.

There is a wide variety of surgical cases at INEN including neurosurgery and ENT. Most of the cases involve tumor removals.
How does INEN compare to other hospitals in Peru?

✶ My stay at INEN was very welcoming. Both residents as well as faculty were all very attentive.

✶ INEN is one of the best hospitals in Lima, Peru. It had a lot of equipment that may not be found at other facilities in Peru.

✶ It was explained that there are vary many poor areas in Peru with hospitals that may only have limited equipment such as 2 laryngoscopes to share between 5 ORs!

✶ Learning about the big disparities in healthcare in Peru and how different patient care can be even within the same city was one of the most profound experiences I’ve had as a nurse anesthesia student.
The cultural experience

Pediatric unit displaying patient’s artwork on the walls.
The cultural experience

- **Perception of time** - I found that there is less focus on time in the Peruvian culture. If a case was scheduled to start at 0730—it did not mean it would start right at 0730. The sense of time is much more relaxed in Peru. It would be okay for the case to get started between 0730 and 0800.

- **Kiss on the cheek** - it is customary to “kiss on the cheek” when greeting someone even if it is a stranger. This is the customary form of greeting in Peru which took me a little time to get used to instead of doing a handshake.

- **Public transportation** - The main form of transportation is public transportation. Lima is a very busy city with lots of traffic. I did notice that traffic signals are not followed as strictly as in the US. Pedestrians must take extra caution when crossing streets as cars will not wait for pedestrians to cross the street.