

Manguzi Journal

Plane food is awesome!

I survived my first international flight. It was not as bad as I imagined it, but there was less leg room than I thought there would be! Thank goodness for an aisle seat. Honestly the first 4 hours of the trip were like vacation to me! They served me beer and a really good meal. I may be the only person in the world that thoroughly enjoys plain food. I was kicking back with all of the beer and soda water I wanted watching an unbelievable selection of new release movies and TV episodes. For someone without cable, this was a true luxury. It wasn't until just about our pit stop in Decar that I was really tired and realized we were only halfway through. The chairs were just not the right shape for my back but thankfully a friend provided me with a blow up travel pillow which I was too embarrassed to inflate at first but soon said screw it. I got up quite a bit and was impressed and comforted by a woman that frequently went to the back of the plane to do air squats! On the way home, I think I will copy her with some downward dog! I loved all of the meals they served and soon became less shy to order multiple beverages! The connecting flight from Johannesburg to Durban also served us a delicious sandwich and free alcohol on a 45 min flight. American domestic flights suck is what I have learned so far!

Welcome to the Roundavel

Drove the 5 hours to Manguzi in our rental car from our pretty swanky hotel in Durban, at which, I indulged in one last elliptical workout. The drive was through beautiful landscape with green rolling hills and farms with lots of livestock. The coolest thing is that livestock run amok here! There were no fences so big ol steer were just chillin on the side of the road or even on the road at times. I'm amazed that people don't steal livestock or maybe they do! Watching Armand drive on the left side of the road from the right side of the car was pretty amusing as well but he did a great job. We arrived at the hospital and had to find someone to let us borrow their phone so we could call Krystal to let us into our accommodations. We are all three staying at a one room roundavel that is about the cutes thing I've ever seen with a thatched roof! There is plumbing a fridge, microwave and anything you could need. We unloaded and headed to the Spar (grocery store) so we could get a few basics like filtered water. The town and Spar were like a mad house people were everywhere and the store was like Wal-Mart the night before a huge snowstorm.

Peace core stalkers and cool new friends!

One thing I learned quickly is people in SA do not respect personal space like Americans! They shove into you and cut in line if you leave an inch of space between you and the person in front. I was slightly overwhelmed by the people, converting dollars to Rands, and Kcal's from KJoules. I just snagged the basics PB, bread, bananas, and water. When in line a white lady ever so subtly stalked us and asked us for a ride home from the store. It was an American couple from California who are in the peace core here teaching English. We gave them a ride. They were harmless but odd. They did let us in on the fact that it was payday and that is why the town and store was so crazy! We got back and went to do some exploring on the hospital

grounds. On our way back some young people invited us in for tea and coffee. They were OT, therapists, dentist, etc. doing their community service year. They are so awesome and friendly. They were telling us about all of the cool things we can do on weekends and we are planning a safari weekend with them! They also love to workout and I planned on joining them for an interval workout at 0530. They have me really excited for the month to come but I'm a little nervous for my first day tomorrow!

Everyone laugh at the foreigners

We showed up for the doctors meeting our first day in scrubs which we were told ahead of time that we could where only to find that they thought his was hilarious. We took so much crap from everyone for wearing them. At one point in time the entire room was laughing at us and we weren't sure why. I quickly realized this was going to be a much tougher transition than I thought. New language, thick accents, different acronyms for common medical things and not knowing where anything is or the flow of any unit. I can't forget that fact that I was rusty with my medical knowledge and never learned much about TB and HIV, which turns out everyone, has here. No exaggeration. I've already seen the most ridiculously rare things. Before today I had seen one tb and one HIV patient. Here, asking if they are taking their retrovirals is like asking a vital sign. It was a really tough day. I felt stupid most of the time and I'm trying to figure out what my role is here. I'm hoping each day will get better

Much better!

Today went a lot better! My doctor told me she was busy and pawned me off on the OR which was fine with me because that is my homeland. The OR here does not operate to the same standards as the US but I bonded with some of the docs today and I am finally getting my feet under me! They are still some long days though! I ran into the girls Jess and Simone today and they are just so nice. We are officially going on a Safari this weekend so that is helping me survive the week!

Safari....check it off the bucket list!

The safari was one of the best weekends of my life. Definitely a top five experience. It was always one of those dreams of mine o do a safari. It was like a bucket list item that I never thought would really happens. It was at Temba Elephant Park and we got a special rate for working at the hospital but unfortunately most of the people from our hospital were going the next weekend. There were some pretty nice folks from another hospital. All young people doing their community service year post professional school graduates, it was so cheap compared to things in the us. It was 1000 rand which is a 100 us dollars for two nights and three safari drives, food included and they feed you well. Everything they charged fro was cheap a well. I indulged in things I never would have like a massage and drinks because it was so dang cheap. It was just wonderful and only a three star place I guess. There was a private massage table, an outdoor shower, and it was all secluded in the trees. Can' go on enough about it. Had some cool encounters with elephants and learned a lot about Zulu culture from our guide

I have been working on my Zulu! Writing down phrases from nurses so I can do some basic rounding without their help because they are not always so helpful actually. They are pretty entertaining though. Their pace is not an American pace. They have very little sense of urgency. And I'm surprised for being the interpreters for most of the Drs. who speak no or very little Zulu, they don't understand a lot of English and at times I have a suspicion that they pretend to not understand more English than they actually do. They definitely don't take much sass from the Drs. I have been enjoying observing the dynamic! But I also see this as a big challenge to medicine here. We are taught that the history is the most important part of the patient encounter and workup. It alone can lead to the diagnosis in many situations. The histories they get here are very short and often inaccurate due to what is lost in translation. I have witnessed a lot get lost in the relaying of the assessment and plan to the patient. This barrier is also a problem with getting proper consent. I don't doubt that the patients often have no idea what they are consenting to.

The OR my homeland in a foreign land!

I spent my first week in the OR because that is where I feel the most comfortable. It really blew my mind the differences in standards and regulations between OR's here and OR's in America. There was a scrub tech that was barefoot and just had shoe covers on her feet! I almost laughed out loud. Moments like that remind me I'm in Africa. It is tough for me to differentiate what is different because I'm in South Africa and what is different because I'm in Rural South Africa. I can't decide whether I should be thankful and impressed that they do what they can with what they have for these people who is better than no care or appalled by the lower standards set and followed.

Government run health care scary or cool?

I am both terrified and impressed by government run health care! A few things that terrified me are the lack of control Dr's and hospitals have with the care they can provide. I realize a lot of this depends on the government controlling the health care and there is some corruption in the South African government from what I hear. A few very simple but important drugs and some other extremely important drugs are "out of stock" and unavailable for use by hospitals and physicians due to the government refusing to buy from certain drug manufactures because of political reasons. It is absolutely ridiculous that the pharmacy here has no Iron tablets, folic acid, or fentanyl which can really impede patient care but it is downright criminal that a very important HIV drug is unavailable and dr's are required to switch drugs. This is extremely dangerous and can create resistance. It is also very dangerous to people with limited drug selection that their disease is susceptible to or that they can tolerate.

There are some pretty great aspects to government health care though. Some of the poorest people I have ever seen have access to some great services. Anyone with a BKA can get a prosthetic. Only those with insurance or those that can afford it get prosthetics in the American system. They also get great axillary services here. They have audiology, eye care, physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, dentistry, etc. And it is all available in the same hospital so they can attend everything in one trip.

Some of the scarier aspects of the health care here is simply due to the rural setting and not necessarily blamed on government health care. For example ambulances for transfers are very very scarce. If someone needs a CT scan they must board a bus for a hospital over 3 hours away and it will be three days before the patient is back at Manguzi with results from their scan. And if they forgot their referral letter in the little brown envelope...tough luck they are sent back! It makes you realize how fortunate we are to have access to the services we do from CT scanners to ambulances, even in the most rural parts of the United States.

Becoming South African

I have been learning so much day to day. It tends to be more about culture and the rural practice of medicines. The people here are so incredibly nice and have really been welcoming. It has been fun getting to know them and it is still quite weird to have what's considered a foreign accent. It has been fun pointing out terms we have no idea what they are and them looking at us with blank looks when we say things that are foreign to them. I just can't describe enough how good this trip has been. You really don't get it until you have dove into another culture very far from home. I've been trying to dive in as much as possible and try new things and foods. I have sought out a few comfort things of home but I'm trying to live like I'm in South Africa and not home.

America is overpriced

The weekend opportunities for local travel around here are amazing! And it is the cool kind of travel where it is more about local geography and nature than about hotels, restaurants and shopping. Everything is still third world around here. The restaurants have been pretty bad actually with really slow service and translation gaps with service and ordering. Alcohol is very cheap though! Beers are 2 dollars! It has been fun comparing prices with the South Africans and hearing them say what they think is expensive is cheap to us.

I can feel my skin sizzling!

Tembe Elephant Park was of course amazing as described but the next weekend we crossed the border to our North into Mozambique and went to a little beach town (still slightly third world) called Ponta. It had some restaurants, bars, hotels, and a lot street side selling off items. It is very much a town about beach and water activities like scuba diving, swimming with dolphins, surfing, etc. I booked a very cheap surf lesson and Armand planned a dive trip. We all stayed at the scuba center where they had tents with cots bathroom shower facilities and a restaurant bar. It was basically on the beach. It ended up being perfect and cheap. It was so hot on Saturday and the sun at Mozambique is just another level! You could feel it burning your skin. We did some beach lying, bar hopping, street market bartering, and walking around the small town. One of the staffers was camping there as well to swim train for his triathlon and we all went for a famous R&R at Fernando's which I thought were not quite as delicious as advertised but we had a blast!

A border crossing woopsy daisy

The next day all of our beach activities were cancelled due to windy weather and ocean conditions but I wasn't too bummed because the change cooled down the weather and we enjoyed some more beach laying and the best meal since I had been here at Mangos. Later that day we were told the bad news that we were not lucky earlier in that we were not charged for our Visas which would have been 80 bucks to cross the border, that we were in fact over illegally. We only got stamped out of South Africa but turns out you are supposed to get stamped in to Mozambique which would be where we would have bought our visa. We were very nervous about going back because we do not speak Portuguese. We thankfully could speak to our driver that picked us up from the border because it is 4x4 only. He was so nice and knew some people at the border so he had us stay in the car and negotiated our deal. We were not fined! We simply had to pay the cost of our original visa. Thank goodness for Fifi. We had to pool our cash to pay for the visas and had little left to pay Fifi so we owe him big time!

Finally, some procedures!

The start of our last full week! I am in the RU which is the same as our ER. It is very interesting and I'm finally getting the medical experience I was wanting. They let you do a lot and I think it helps that we have been here a while so there is trust. I did more in my first morning of RU than I had done this whole experience. It helped that I had a cool doctor, a lot of times it is luck of the draw. I was actually feeling useful. I got to do a blood draw by sticking the femoral vein, an LP, and an Implenon removal in one morning session. They just have so many more opportunities for these procedures the doctors are quite happy to hand them over so it feels like I'm helping and getting great experience at the same time.

Becoming an Implenon removal expert

I have good and slow days in the RU. I am accumulating lots of Implenons which are great because it's like a mini surgery that keeps me busy and the doctors hate doing them. I also have experience with a couple thoracentesis and replacing a suprapubic catheter. I also took care of a very scary case of croup. They have this treatment guidelines book that is actually quite nice. It is very basic and states the treatment and dose. It is very straightforward. As a med student this limited medicine and resources makes diagnosing and treating patients simpler and I feel like I could effectively do some of it on my own at the stage of training I'm in right now. There are no second and third line treatments to complicate things and there is a limited drug list available. This may not be best for the patient but it makes for pretty simple medicine. Again, I'm not sure if I should be thankful for what they have available in this rural area or appalled at what little they have available.

The Com Serve concept

I have really enjoyed getting to know the people here. The staff is very nice, especially the Physios, OT's and other staff. Most of the doctors are great as well. It is a fun young community. The idea of a community service year is actually really great. It is good for the country and the young health care workers. It is of course a huge sacrifice, but I think it would be a valuable experience in the long run. It removes you from your comfort zone and gives you the opportunity to see a different side to medicine and exposes you to the needs of your

country. What a great way to staff the rural hospitals. Yes, there would be a lot of turnover but it also provides a chance some may extend their time here or come back when some of them may never have been exposed to it. If their attitude is right, it can actually be a really fun year. They do social events at night and get to explore the area on the weekends and it is kind of like a big party! Living and eating with friends every night takes you back to the dorm days which would be fun for just a year. We could use this idea in America, especially with the lack of doctors and other health professionals in rural areas. I know Americans would throw an absolute fit if they were forced to do such a thing though! It is a cool way to put the needs of your country first!

Some impressive pathology

Today's RU experience was very interesting. I saw a very extended abdomen in a 22 yo man. I was excited to see the workup of something that will be part of my daily practice as a general surgery resident in a few months. This man's problem started just last night but his abdomen was extremely distended and tight. I saw my first NG tube passed which is crazy that I hadn't seen one yet. They of course do not have suction here, it passes only to gravity. The abdominal x-rays were some of the most impressive I've ever seen. This was a massively distended colon. I was pretty worried about him and the doctor in the RU, in my view poorly managed the poor guy. Thankfully they called a hospital with the surgical capabilities to take care of this guy. I was very worried he would perforate before the chopper came for him. There wasn't a lot of surveillance on the guy and there was a very long delay in giving him normal saline. He waited all day in the RU for the chopper to come. We could have driven him there quicker. It was a very impressive case the poor man was in a great deal of pain.

Yikes some questionable medicine!

Another interesting case came in that I thought was also poorly managed. A white couple on a long road trip back home from vacation stopped in because the woman had a blood clot. She had one before and the signs were the exact same. I examined her and quickly agreed. It was interesting because the doctor covering RU is often off running around somewhere and not actually in the RU and the nurses there often aren't paying much attention and speaking to only each other. The couple immediately sought me out desperate for help. It was actually pretty nice to be able to communicate directly to a patient for once. Some of the nurses act like it is a huge inconvenience to interpret for me. It was also nice to be able to small talk and acquire a really thorough history. That is usually the med student job but is very difficult for even the doctor with the language barriers. The last time they gave here LMW heparin injections for three days and warfarin for a few days. For DVT usually you are treated with Warfarin for 6 months but she said because it was superficial they did not treat as long. I told them we would probably check an US to make sure it wasn't a DVT. The woman really wanted a LMW heparin injection just to get her back to her doctor butt she was on a 9 hour road trip which is the perfect storm for a DVT. I was very concerned for this woman but I cannot blame her for not wanting to be admitted here. I would be terrified to be admitted at this hospital. There is just limited medicine here. I was pretty amazed how the physician handled this case. He sent her on her way after simply giving her a prophylactic dose of LMW heparin not even a therapeutic dose and gave her no advice to look for warning signs of PE or to stop and walk often. I was pretty flabbergasted. This particular physician I thought was very careless and not thorough. I found

out later a lot of the other doctors agree. I tried to help that family as much as I could because I was very concerned for her. This physician handled a nonketotic hyperosmolar hyperglycemia case very poorly as well. It was just such a crazy day in the RU. This week has pretty much made my experience clinically.

Baby turtles!

We organized a turtle hunt with some of the other staff. We were picked up at the hospital gate and all ten of us sat on the bed of a truck with boards for benches. There are just no rules here. Like the liability of this company in America would be insane. I mean McDonalds has to warn people that their coffee is hot just to avoid a law suit. I still haven't even seen a car seat as well. These are a few things that just make me realize that I'm in a totally different world and how third world this place is compared to America. The ride hurt our butts so bad! Because there is only one paved road and these four by four roads are so awful to drive on even with cushions. It was slightly miserable but the conversation was good! I really enjoy getting to know these people. I was worried our 250 rand was going to be for nothing but the trip ended up a success. We walked along the beach in complete darkness only the guide was allowed to shine lights. They lead us on a long walk along the beach after giving us a little education on turtles and their egg laying habits. This was the season to see the nest hatchlings we would not see the female this time of the year. The most amazing thing is that only one or two survive out of a thousand turtles in a nest and you can see why after you see how fragile these little guys are going into the turbulent ocean. We saw one nest not hatched yet and witnessed the hatching of one! Those little guys are so cute! They follow the light to get to the white of the ocean waves breaking but when people are flashing cameras and flashlights they will follow it so the guides instruct you not to throw them off too much. It was very cool.

Amarulla?

Our last Saturday we decided to skip the famous Amarulla festival which we found out was a good idea actually. It would have been kind of cool because it is such a neat cultural thing to see. Amarullo is a fruit that they ferment into an alcohol and make a beer out of it. I heard of students going in the past. The king comes and there are speeches in Zulu and free food and this mysterious alcohol. It was all of the buzz amongst the nurses at the hospital and supposedly accommodations were pretty booked due to the draw to the festival. A lot of the doctors reported that they were supposed to go early because things get dangerous crazy after 4 pm but they said they waited forever to serve the food and nobody I talked to actually got to try the beer. There was some cool dancing and speeches though.

South Africans are friendlier than Americans!

Went to the Kosi Bay Mouth for some snorkeling and sun on Saturday. We parked at the lodge, bought passes, and were headed to trek it down the three mile sandy walk to the mouth where the lakes feed into the ocean. A very nice South African family in a four by four picked us up! Thank goodness because it was hot! Maggie and I crawled in the hatch back and Armand spoke Africans in the middle seat with the family. It was interesting to see how the little boy reacted very racially to the Zulu boys running behind the vehicle. This family was very kind to

pick us up. I got to snorkel for the very first time. It was great! This was such a unique place the currents were crazy! There were also tons of homemade fish traps along the way. It is such a unique place I can't describe. Because of how the currents were I got to work on my swim stroke for my tri because it was like swimming in a current pool and you don't go anywhere is I could stay by our stuff and get a good workout at the same time! The same awesome family gave us a ride back up as well!

The beautiful Mamella Lodge and the good ol surfer dude Willis

Saturday evening we headed to Mamella lodge owned by this surfer named Willis. Some staff from our hospital and another rural hospital was spending the weekend there. It was a very unique place! Very cool accommodations. However we did not realize it was the type of place you brought your own beverages and it was sort of like camping. The wall at the Roundavel from past students said we could organize a hike so Maggie and I were game. The place we stayed in was a chalet the others stayed in tents. This place slept four people and was very natural and beautiful. It would be a great honeymoon place. The walls opened up to the sunrise and there was a beautiful view! There was a very cool outdoor shower and toilet as well! No electricity and we of course were not sure how to use the lanterns! It was a very cool nature path you took to get to our chalet as well. We signed up for the dinner and thankfully they let us drink from the on your honor bar. The meal was South African and authentic! It was absolutely wonderful! It had been a while since I had something other than bran flakes and protein bars. It was homemade from Willis and his wife. We also sat with a couple from Germany and it was so interesting to chat with them they were on a holiday trip. We had a good night!

Dog Point

The next day we signed up for the breakfast and it was again great. Maggie and I went for the hike and we eventually met the rest of the crew down at the beach called black rock which was more desolate than Kosi bay or Ponta. It was a cloudy cool day great for the hike but not the best beach weather. It was fun to watch them surf though and I swam a little. The hike was beautiful we went to a place called dog point and it was a pretty lookout! Then we walked the beach against some massive winds to where everybody was hanging out. We spent a few hours there and then headed back to Manguzi when they brought people back to the lodge. It was a good last weekend but we were all looking forward to our final days of travel and getting home!

Local cuisine

The last week I'm doing a mash up of units. We are skipping around to different units we wanted to get exposure to before we left. The first day I'm starting my morning out at RU. There was a gunshot wound that came in the night before. He was very stable and just waiting transport; otherwise it has been a pretty slow morning in the RU. Not like the way my last week ended. Tonight we are going to try a local Manguzi place just down the street from the hospital. This is one of only two local places we were suggested to eat at. Steers is the fast food burger joint in the gas station is the only chain that we were told was worth eating because the KFC we heard was hit and miss and Fish and Chips and Why not chicken are all a little suspect. We were also warned about the local place Gugu's Kitchen that we are not to get the

beef. The chicken is safer but I think being this close to leaving, I will play it really safe and go vegetarian. I want to try another local food called semp. I have had milli pop and I really like it. So I'm planning on the sump and beans. I'm not sure anything can top the awesome South African cuisine we had at Tembe and Mamella. So delicious, I could go on and on. I even liked the sausage mixture of several different meats which is very unlike me!

Goodbyes

Finally leaving Manguzi. It is bittersweet. I am excited to get back home and see my family. I also have to admit that I'm ready for some of my American indulgences like subway, no more sand in my bed, on the floor, in my shoes etc. and a break from the heat. I'm sure when I get back to the dead of winter I'll be wishing I were back! I will miss many people here! They were all so friendly and great. It was sad to say goodbye! I got a few of their emails since I'm the only person my age not on Facebook. They were just a really nice bunch. We had drinks and homemade ice cream at the staff house the night before we left. It was a great time! Now on to the long travel home. I am dreading that flight back. Due to winds, it will be an even longer flight back.

What a great experience!

This has been an experience of a lifetime and was very important for me to do. It opened my eyes to the world and has inspired me in so many ways. I could go on and on about how beneficial this will be to me. A small town girl about as far away from home as geographically possible, a minority for the first time, and immersed in a foreign culture experiencing a completely new language, seeing some magnificent sites, all while getting to see an entirely different side of medicine organization, practice, and disease. I got to perform procedures that are not often seen in the US and see the challenge and triumphs of rural medicine. All while connecting with interesting new people. It was a challenge at times but a good one. I will take so much away from this trip. I also grew close and learned so much about two of my classmates. It would have been near impossible without them! The trip was worth every penny and long hours of the flight there!