

A group of 5 Monash Medical students set off in December 2016 after having organised what was going to be the first ever TeamMED trip to India. To ensure sustainability we worked with “Chinmaya Organisation for rural development” (CORD), a local NGO. With their expertise we were able to identify a local area of need and develop a project to address this. The project chosen focused on qualitatively assessing drug and alcohol use in school children in rural Himachal Pradesh, India.

- Visited 8 rural schools and 1 university in Himachal Pradesh in varying locations
- 3 of these schools, bordering Punjab, were ‘at risk’ as identified by the education minister
- Conducted group discussion with students from year 9-year 12, totalling to direct interaction with around 350 students
- Conducted interviews with teachers and principals at each school totalling to direct interaction with around 18 staff
- Visited 2 de-addiction centres where we spoke to patients and staff
- Visited one rural police station

With our information and experience on the field we were able to develop a report. From this we identified a relevant, culturally sensitive and achievable suggestion to CORD for a solution to the issue. The program suggested was aimed at fostering a more informed, supportive and open community attitude towards people who take drugs and aimed to prevent youth from engaging in such activities.

TeamMED will continue its relationship with CORD to implement this recommended solution with modifications to improve feasibility and applicability.

The students very much enjoyed their experience, “The food, the work and the hills were amazing!”