

Nepal Trip Synopsis

Team Med takes 10-12 students from years I-V on an annual trip to the rural mountains of Nepal to provide local medical aid, run a health promotion program and donate much needed supplies. We work with a Kathmandu based organisation called, Himalayan Guge Organisation (HGO) which is a small, family run NGO that has been providing volunteer support for the communities that we visit for many years. The trip itself involves visiting remote villages and running temporary medical clinics, for villagers and locals, some of whom won't have sought medical attention in 5+ years and walk for many days to seek treatment. A trained Nepalese doctor, with previous experience in running clinics like ours will accompany us and guide us in running the clinic. The trip also involves running a health promotion campaign and health education to ensure that our efforts have a lasting impact on these communities. Furthermore, we will bring basic first aid supplies and medications that can be donated to the local health post and the local school. This year we will also work with the Days for Girls organisation, to assist in providing education in women's health. This is a big issue to tackle in Nepal given the stigma around the discussion of many women's health issues. Money that we raise will go towards, building a permanent medical clinic in Bigu Gompa (the larger of the two villages we will visit), which is an ongoing long-term project currently underway with HGO and TeamMED.

Team MED 2016 Nepal Trip Report

The members of the 2016 team all arrived in Kathmandu at different times and slowly trickled into our hotel over 2 days. Our first morning as a group was spent enjoying a buffet breakfast before having a meeting with Tashi Phuntsok, the director of the Himalayan Guge Organisation, our trip leader and all time good bloke. We reviewed the medications that Tashi had bought at a local pharmacy and confirmed our trip itinerary. Later that day we visited a local hospital and natural medicine clinic, in order to help understand the current health issues facing this community, and the health system in Nepal.

The journey to Bigu Gompa was a long one! We woke up early and travelled from Kathmandu in a jeep for 7 hours. The scenery was stunning from the jeep, but was NOTHING in comparison to stunning mountain views that we witnessed on the 8-hour hike the next day. That hike was long; we walked through paddocks of yaks, made our own log bridges across rivers, climbed steep rock faces and hung prayer flags at the Tinsang Pass whilst gazing at the Tibetan mountain ranges. We arrived at Bigu Gompa after dark, and were warmly welcomed by the nuns and hot Tibetan butter tea.

The next day, Tashi showed us around the Nunnery where we were staying and introduced us to the Nepalese doctor who would be running the clinic with us. The damage from the 2015 earthquakes was obvious, with many buildings clearly reduced to rubble or cracking dramatically. We were staying in tents because the visitor's quarters have been completely destroyed.

The first day of the clinic was chaos with close to 100 patients! Luckily we had a

system, multiple stations manned with a pre-clinical student and a clinical student and multiple translators! Despite the chaos, it worked well and importantly the patients were seen. The most common conditions affecting the community were GORD, musculoskeletal pain and dry eyes. We were briefed on this prior to arriving and so were relatively well equipped and ran all the dosing and medications by our Nepalese doctor. We worked hard and were exhausted but thanks to our lovely team, ate delicious Nepalese momo's for dinner.

The rest of the days were less busy, our system worked well and we spent a lot of time drinking tea, exploring the scenery, meeting the nuns and enjoying what Bigu had to offer. Our health promotion strategy, of hand hygiene and nutrition education unfortunately fell by the wayside and our plan to educate patients as they came through the clinic in hindsight was ineffective. This year, I hope that this can be rectified through our work with Days for Girls and specifically allocating time to talk to the nuns and go to the local school to run a health promotion program.

There were definitely some kinks in the road but overall it was a successful, productive trip and something to be proud of. I would strongly recommend students from all years to apply and get involved!

Rachel Mende
Team Med Nepal Coordinator 2017