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› Physical therapy student from University of Louisville gains valuable experience while volunteering in Nepal

As a soon-to-be final year student in the Health and Human Performance program at University of Louisville, 21-year-old Kelly Wilkie needed to complete 240 hours of practical work experience. When she found out she could complete her internship in Nepal, she jumped at the opportunity.

Based in the small town of Bharatpur in the Chitwan region of Nepal, the Kentucky native spent 2 and a half months interning at the Chitwan Medical College Hospital (CMC): "It's very different to health centers back home, some days you have to walk over loose bricks to get into the canteen, and other days the reception gets flooded. It's generally a nice place, but some things that are OK here really wouldn't stand back in the United States."

While the facilities at CMC may not meet American standards, the hospital is well respected in Nepal and the doctors do the best they can with what they have. Interning in the Physical Therapy unit, Kelly got involved in an array of cases: "On the very first day I helped a stroke patient," she says "I'd never before seen someone who'd just suffered a stroke, and the doctors showed me how

to mobilize his hands. I never expected to assist in the way I did in such a real case."

Over the two and a half months Kelly volunteered at the hospital she saw many other cases and learnt how to interpret x-rays, but one patient in particular stood out: "One day this 8-year-old girl who had been in a road accident came in, the skin on her arm had been ripped off - It looked like she had been in a fire. She needed regular treatment and over the next 2 weeks I helped her more and more and saw some solid progress. It was very rewarding."

After a day at the hospital Kelly would return home to the local host family where she stayed throughout her time in Nepal. "I found the family home such a great place to be, I'd thought I wouldn't be able to be myself, but they've been great fun to stay with - I'd even goof off with my 12-year-old host-brother and we would play cards when there's no electricity. It was great fun."

Kelly has also enjoyed being with other foreign volunteers in Nepal: "It's awesome getting to meet people from all over the world, and travel with them; and

learning about other cultures has been great. It also means I've got an excuse to travel more as so many people have offered to have me stay with them."

Kelly's closing words of advice to future volunteers is this: "You should be realistic in your expectations when coming to Nepal, it is super awesome but so different to the U.S. Prepare to be shocked by what you see and frustrated by how slow things are. Be ready for difficult days but enjoy every moment!"



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