



**ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
Mennonite College of Nursing

Transcultural Experience to Brazil



Student Journals by:

Natalie Akins
Kenia Najera
Rachel Sterling
Mia Cece
Kelly Fiedler

May 18th

Thursday May 18th was our official first day in Londrina Brazil. We were picked up from our host homes and taken to the Universidade Estadual de Londrina. While at the university we were given a couple of, extremely interesting, presentations on the nursing curriculum of UEL and the healthcare system of Brazil. The presentations were given by professors, students and residents, some with a translator to assist.

During these presentations we learned that UEL has an integrated curriculum, meaning that all of the subjects are learned together and used to problem solve. They believe that to solve problems you must use all of the information available to you and then use all areas of knowledge to find a solution. This way of thinking and learning has led to a technique of starting with the total and then looking at all of the parts. This involves a very interdisciplinary and integrated theory of practice.



Day one presentations given by UEL professors and students.



Day one, the group of professors and students from UEL that gave us the wonderful presentations.

We also learned about the healthcare system in Brazil. In Brazil it is written in the constitution that health is a right of every citizen. This means that they have a public healthcare system that is free to all citizens. The system is decentralized (which is very important because of the economic status of different regions), regionalized and socially controlled (meaning citizens are very involved.) All funding is provided by taxes in different areas. The healthcare system is called SUS. SUS not only provides healthcare access, it also promotes health

campaigns, like 20 Reasons to Celebrate, in order to help citizens before they need care.

The healthcare system in Brazil is split into 4 branches. The primary branch is non-urgent care. These clinics are open from 7am to 7pm and help with finances, time and crowding. The secondary branch includes more specialized clinics. The tertiary branch includes hospitals which provide major surgeries, transplants and high risk pregnancy care. The last branch is the network. The network includes public health services, 24 hour emergency clinics, mental health clinics (provide appointments, interventions



Day one during the hospital tour. What the UEL university hospital calls their "Grey's Anatomy" bridge.

and groups), and many other services. The higher you go (tertiary being the highest), the less you know each person individually.

We finished our day with a visit to the University Rector or Deputy Head. He told us that the UELs nursing program is a model for other universities in Brazil. The university also owns the University Hospital, but the hospital is used by SUS.

Lastly, we went back to our host families where we spent time eating with and getting to know them. During the day we also learned how much we all love Brazilian espresso with sugar!

May 19th

Friday May 19th was our second day in Londrina Brazil. We started the day with a presentation on Illinois State University and the Mennonite College of Nursing. We started our presentation by introducing all of ourselves and the school. We talked about our curriculum and simulation labs. There were about 150 people present and we spent the majority of the presentation answering all of the questions that the UEL students had about nursing school and professional nursing in the United States.

After the presentation we were surprised with a Capoeira (a Brazilian style of dancing) presentation and lesson. We learned that Capoeira was a form of dancing invented by slaves in order to fight for their right to freedom that was illegal at one point because of the confidence it was giving to slave communities. It was surprisingly difficult and fun to learn and practice. The next morning, we were all extremely sore. Learning Capoeira made us all very hungry and we were then taken to eat a traditional Brazilian meal, which was delicious.



Day two Capoeira lessons!



Day two ISU student presentation and question panel.

We finished our second day with a tour of the University Hospital. We visited many different units and talked to many different nurses and residents. Some of their units were similar to ones you would see in the United States, except there were less computers. The tour was amazing and made us even more excited for our shadowing scheduled for later in the week.

All of our experiences learning about the healthcare system in Brazil and visiting the University Hospital gave us insight into how other people in the world provide care. We were able to see and observe what it is like to work and get care in a system where everyone has access.

May 20th

Today was our first day to sleep in and enjoy some free time with our host family. I stayed with Cris, a nursing faculty member from Universidade Estadual de Londrina. For breakfast we had eggs, toast, and coffee. When I was served coffee, I was expecting a big mug. Instead I was given a small cup.



Driving around Londrina

Because the coffee is finely grinded and prepared differently, the taste is unique and delicious. I also learned that Sao Paulo, the city where we had our connecting flight, happens to be one of the main growing areas for coffee. Shortly after, Cris took me to drive around the city of Londrina. We listened to Brazilian music while we drove around and listened to dance music called “funk” and to some country music also known as “seraneja.” We met the rest of our group at one of the shopping malls. Since Cris and I arrived a little early, we had some time to grab lunch. Many of the places where we went to eat had a scale that weighed the food, and based on that weight, they determine the price. The money used in Londrina is reals and about 3 reals or so are the equivalence to 1 US dollar.



Moka Pot used to make coffee

When we met with the rest of the group, we greeted one another with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. This is a very common way to greet one another. Ultimately, we all walked around and bought souvenirs to bring back to our friends and family. They had a stand at the mall that from far away looked like real fruit. The closer we got, the more we realized that the fruit was odd looking and more shiny. To our surprise, we found out that this was soap. After we finished our Shopping my host and I headed home for dinner and to rest.

May 21st

Today was our last free full day with our host. I joined my host to a birthday party at a restaurant where we celebrated Lourita's 80th birthday. She has been one of Cris' close friends for the last 35 years. As previously mentioned, we greeted one another with a kiss on the cheek and a hug. We all sat down to talk and eat. All of Lourita's grandchildren saved money to buy her a ring as a gift. All the family is really close and enjoy birthday celebrations.

Later that evening, I tried Acai which is a Brazilian dessert and attended mass with my host. In Brazil, many people are used to going to church in the evening instead of the day time like we are used to. The most common religion in Brazil is Roman Catholicism.



This past weekend, I learned some valuable lessons that I will carry with me throughout my life and my career. Brazilian families are close to one another and very affectionate. Many times if we were running late, my host would not seem rushed at all. Their lifestyle is not fast paced like we are used to in the U.S. It is important, that as a nurse, I take my time with patients who are from this culture. Taking the time to listen attentively, hold their hand, and acknowledge any family members in the room would mean a lot to them. I learned that many times they are only allowed two family members in the some units such as the ER. Many nurses understand their strong family bonds and allow more family members. This is something to keep in mind should I encounter a similar situation. I also noted that making eye contact is equally important as well as proximity. Brazilians enjoy sharing stories, having a good time, and over all interaction with others. Ultimately, I learned to relax and live in the moment. We live in a fast paced world, we often forget to take the time to breathe and look at what is in front of us.



On the left is a small box with tea bags from Lourita's birthday party. The picture on the right shows a dessert called Acai which is a creme like ice cream from the acai fruit. Mine has strawberries, banana, Nutella, granola, and condensed milk. Yum! ☺



Brazil group summer 2017 with our lovely Brazilian Host



May 22nd & 23rd

Monday and Tuesday were our two days of shadowing the nursing residents at the hospital. Nurse residents are BSN nurses who have been admitted to a 2 year clinical intensive in an area of expertise e.g. women's health, intensive care, infectious disease, or surgical nursing. These nurses will be clinical leaders upon completion of this experience. We were all divided up onto different units and would switch between them after lunch each day. The units that we were able to observe in were the Women's Unit, the Pediatric



A picture of us outside the hospital during our lunch break after being on the units in the morning!

Unit, the OR, the Burn Unit, the Maternity Unit, and the Emergency Room. I spent my first morning on the Burn Unit. On the burn unit, I got the opportunity to observe the patients receive showers in the "process room" as well as observe debridement and grafts being made in the OR. My resident explained to me that skin that appears white is of a third-degree burn while the pink skin is characteristic of a second-degree burn. All of the dead skin from the third-degree burn needed to be removed prior to that area being able to receive a graft. I saw the healthy skin that was taken for the graft and then it was explained to me that the skin would then go through a machine to create holes in the skin which would allow it to be stretched and cover a larger surface. During my time observing on the burn unit I also learned their method of wrapping and bandaging up the burns. They use a method of 4 layers, the first being ointment, then gauze, cotton, and a bandage. If a patient has burns on their torso they use the four layers to create a sort of vest to be wrapped around the patient's entire torso.

In the afternoon, I shadowed a few nursing residents on the pediatric unit. All of the staff on this unit was very welcoming and I was able to see a lot during the four hours that I was there! Some of the cases that were on this unit included a baby that was born with its intestines outside of its abdominal wall, a baby with microcephaly, a premature baby, a child with pneumonia and one who was in a car crash and suffered some liver damage. The nurses told me that many of the children that are on the unit stay there for an extended period of time, and that a lot of the families usually stay with the children on the unit for most of the day.

On Tuesday, I spent my morning observing in the Emergency Department. The resident who showed me around first gave me a very good tour of the whole ER, explaining that it was divided up into four units. These separate units were OB, pediatric, the main ER area, and then a men and women area. This hospital's emergency room is one of the best in the area so patients from farther away come there as well and that is why their emergency room is always so busy. The biggest difference I noticed on this unit compared to how ER's function in the U.S is that the nurse technicians or CNA's are the ones to give medications, start IV's and do a lot of the hands-on work while the nurse is the one coordinating the

patient's plan of care. The space in the ER allowed for 2 patients per room, and there was also one trauma room and 2 emergency rooms that are used for patients to be stabilized in upon arriving at the hospital. Those rooms can also be used for patients who have been intubated and need to be very closely monitored.

Tuesday afternoon, I was on the women's unit, which very closely resembled a medical surgical unit. The resident who showed me around the unit was very welcoming and made sure to introduce me to each and every staff member and patient. Everyone was very friendly and I really enjoyed the atmosphere on that unit! There were about eight patients there that were intubated and the other cases varied from infection to small injuries, and there were a couple of cases of pregnant women with UTI's. This floor had 4 separate isolation rooms with about 4 patients in each room. My resident told me that the patients in the isolation rooms all had antibiotic resistant bacteria, so we put on PPE prior to entering each of those rooms.

After my two days of shadowing on the different units in the hospital I learned that their healthcare delivery system is very patient focused as most of the nurses knew their patients well and it was evident that the patients were very trusting of the nurses who were taking care of them. This experience will help me to be a more culturally sensitive nurse because even though at first, I may only see the differences between Brazil's healthcare practices and the U. S's, I realized after spending more time on the unit, that as nurses we are all striving for and achieving the same goal which is to help our patients get better. This experience has taught me that even in healthcare, different is not always bad and that some variations in healthcare systems to fit the variations in culture is a positive thing!

May 24th

Today was our first day visiting different facilities out in the community. We started our day at the transplant center in Londrina, then broke into groups to visit some community health centers, did a little bit of shopping downtown, visited the lake, and ended the day with our hosts.

First thing in the morning we all piled into the van and headed over to our first stop of the day: the transplant center. Here we were given a presentation by nurse Ogle Bacchi that covered everything from the history of transplants in Brazil to current transplant policies today. We learned that organ transplants are organized by OSO and funded by SUS, both of which are public institutions. This means that everyone has an equal opportunity to get the organ(s) they need because there is not the obstacle of cost in the way. This came as quite a shock to me with my current knowledge of how expensive transplants can be in the United States. On the other hand, patients sometimes have to wait many years to get their transplants because of the large amount of people who need them. Brazil's public transplantation system is currently the largest in the world and in absolute numbers has the second highest amount of transplants, just behind the United States. The presentation was overall very informative and I feel as though I learned a lot.



Following the presentation we split into two groups of three to visit some community health centers. Our instructor Kim, another student Kenia, and myself were sent to Unidade Basica de Saude Uniao da Vitoria where we shadowed resident nutritionist Luana. This center is in a very poor part of the city and provides care, free of charge, to over 20,000 people. The facility has employees of all specialties including physical therapists, nutritionists, dentists, nurses, and more in order to provide all patients with the best care they can get. What surprised me was that we spent the majority of our time not in the center itself, but out in the community doing home visits. It was very eye-opening and heartbreaking to see the conditions that these people live in. However, the absolute compassion and non-judgement that the employees at the community center showed towards these people was something so special. You could tell that they have a real passion for what they do. These home visits ended up being one of my favorite parts of the trip.



We finished up at the community health centers early in the afternoon so all of the ISU nursing students and faculty got back together to do some shopping. We went to downtown Londrina to look for souvenirs and admittedly ended up with a bit more than we planned on buying. The main strip with a bunch of



shops lined on each side was absolutely beautiful. There were people everywhere you looked selling yummy treats, handmade crafts, clothing of all types, and more. A few hours later, shopping bags in hand, we made a quick pit-stop at the lake before heading home to our hosts. It was just before sunset when we arrived and the view of the lake with the buildings in the background was breathtaking.

For dinner that night my host Raquel took the two of us to a restaurant called Arnaldos for hotdogs. These were not the type of hotdogs I was used to though. They came sliced in half on a big bun with shredded chicken, ketchup, mustard, mayo, and pepper sauce on them if you'd like. I was a bit skeptical about chicken and hotdogs together but let me just say that it was DELICIOUS. Don't knock it until you try it. We spent a little bit of time there afterwards just talking about our lives; the differences and similarities. We spent more time laughing than anything. Raquel and I retired to bed shortly after we got home since we both had another early morning the next day.

May 25th

Today was our last day of nursing-related activities before our adventure to Foz do Iguacu. It included visits to three different facilities followed by our visit evaluation. The day ended with a big gathering of all of the ISU visitors and our hosts for one last meal together.



The day started bright and early once again when the van took us to CAPS, a psychosocial assistance center. We were greeted by Professor Adriano who gave us a tour of the facility. This particular CAPS was a level 3, the most complex of the levels. We learned that the goal is for people to be there for as short of a time as possible; to treat the crisis and then send them home. All treatment is covered by SUS, so it is free. Something that surprised me was that this facility only had voluntary patients. This is because the unit where I had clinical this past semester treated both voluntary and involuntary patients. The difference in the attitudes of these patients was obvious. I could tell that all of the people at CAPS really wanted to be there and enjoyed their time spent there. We were given the opportunity to sit down during a group where they openly shared their lives and experiences with CAPS, all of which were very positive. The way that the patients described how accepting and supportive the staff was just warmed my heart. The genuine connections between staff and patients were so much deeper than ones I have seen in the United States. At the end of the visit we were given gifts that the patients created during their time at CAPS such as scarves, paintings, and crocheted stuffed animals.



Our next stop was CIDI, a transmissible disease center located in one of the oldest buildings in Londrina, where we were given a tour by Gilselena. This facility provides both testing and treatment for diseases such as HIV and TB, all for free. We were allowed to observe a blood test that checked for HIV, syphilis, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C that gave results in just 15 minutes. Throughout the tour I noticed that they provided a lot of educational brochures and pamphlets for the community about safe sex, prevention, and treatments. I thought that that was really cool because education about these topics is so important. Another thing that I thought was great was that once a month the facility gives out basic baskets with food and other necessities to patients because many of the ones with HIV are homeless. This facility has professionals of all areas including dentists that specifically provide services for people with HIV. Overall I thought that this center was doing a really great job of caring for the people of their community.

Our final stop was at Lucila Ballalai City Maternity Center. This is a center for low-risk patients only; high risk patients are cared for at the hospital. I noticed that even though the facility was a bit crowded with mothers and babies, the care and policies in place were exceptional. One thing that the center focuses on is giving mothers the most natural births possible. They do not give epidurals or pain

medications. Instead they use baths, massages, birthing balls, and other non-pharmacological techniques. Another big focus in this center is breastfeeding. Mothers are not allowed to be discharged until they are breastfeeding successfully. It is very different from the United States, where many mothers choose bottle feed right from the beginning. I personally think that this is a great policy because of the many benefits of breastfeeding. A final thing that stood out to me was that vaccinations are mandatory for newborns. I personally believe that this should be a universal policy because it prevents so many horrible things from possibly happening. I really enjoyed this visit in particular.



After the last of our visits we stopped back at the university for a quick chat with some of our hosts about what we thought of the trip overall. We were able to give feedback on all of the different activities and visits. When we finished that we all went back to our respective houses to prepare for the big dinner that night. Those of us from ISU were in charge of preparing a meal for our hosts. The gathering took place at Denise's with beer nut mix, white chili, Texas sheet cake, chocolate covered strawberries, and more on the menu. It was a night full of eating, sharing, dancing, singing, and lots of laughing. I went home that night with such a bittersweet feeling inside. I felt so blessed to be in such a beautiful country with such amazing people. On the other hand, I knew that the trip was soon coming to an end that I was not nearly prepared for. What I Have Learned and How I Plan on Applying It

Over these past few days I was given the opportunity to visit and observe in so many different healthcare environments. While they all had their differences, there was one thing that was evident everywhere that I went: connection with the patients is of the utmost importance. Regardless of the facility, the core aspect of care is the relationship that the healthcare professionals develop with the people they care for. The patients always had nothing but positive things to say about how supportive, caring, and warm the staff is towards them.



I feel as though I can take this extreme compassion that is involved in nursing in Brazil and apply it to patient relationships I will have in the United States. It will be important for me to pay specific attention to the relationships with Brazilian patients as they are used to a certain level of intimacy in their care. Being open, non-judgmental, and genuinely interested in their situation are all important factors not only for these people, but all people in general.

May 26th

Today we got a bright and early start to leave for Foz do Iguaco (5:00 a.m.!). While we slept for the majority of the 7-hour van ride, Kim and Juli were able to figure out that we all could go to Argentina on Saturday and see that side of the falls. After we got to the hotel and freshened up a bit, we went to the bird park. There, we saw flamingos, macaws, toucans, and even monkeys! At this park, most of the animals were either born in captivity or rescued and rehabilitated there. Some of the birds were rescued from traders who clipped their wings so that they couldn't fly. There were some areas where we observed the birds but there were some where we could walk through their cages! But be careful- I got pooped on! There was also a butterfly house where you could walk through and butterflies would land on you I skipped that part because I am terrified of bugs, but Juli, Kim, Rachel, Kenia, Natalie, and Mia all went. At the end of the park, you got to hold and take a picture with a tame bird!



When we were done with the bird park, we headed across the street to the Brazilian side of the falls. To get there we had to take a bus, and then hike down towards them. The hike was beautiful! I think we stopped about every 5 feet to take pictures. At the bottom, you could walk out on a bridge over the river to get a better view of the falls. We did get a bit wet, but it felt nice after walking all day.

For dinner that night, we went to a Brazilian buffet where they also bring around different cuts of meat, called churrasco that they carve for you at your table. Unlike Fogo de Chao at home, there are no green or red cards to tell the servers when to stop, so they just kept on coming until it was clear we couldn't eat anymore! I think we all ate at least 4 pieces of meat and went through the buffet 3 times. Everything was delicious! We all stuffed ourselves silly and had no problem sleeping that night thanks to our food comas.

May 27th

Today we went to the Argentinean side of the falls. We were lucky that we didn't have to pay for the \$140/person permit that was temporarily waived to cross the border. We got in with no problem and got an extra stamp on our passport too! After a short drive, we reached the Argentinean falls. Our van driver, Leandro, was very helpful in buying our entry tickets and tickets for the boat.

First, we hiked to see the Argentinean side of the falls, which was even more amazing than the Brazilian side because you could see more. While we were walking through the forest to reach the falls, there were bridges over waterfalls and amazing views of the jungle and the falls. After reaching the top of the falls, and taking quite a few pictures, we hiked back down to get ready for the boat ride.

To get to the dock, we had to take a truck through a mile or so of jungle. The guide on the truck told us about different species of animals, and how the land that was now a park, used to be owned by one person who had a lumber business. After getting there, we took some stairs down and got on the boat, after putting on life vests of course. We rode up the river towards the falls, where we stopped to take pictures and admire the falls. After that, they captain told us all to put our stuff away, as we would be going under the falls now. We went under 2 different waterfalls, and were absolutely soaked. It was an amazing experience, although we were pretty wet for the rest of the day.

Once we got off the boat, we had to take a short hike, climb up some stairs, and make our way towards the train, which would take us to a different trail. The train ride was nice; it was the most sitting we had done all day. Once we got off, we made our way towards "the devil's throat" which was a section of the waterfall that literally looked like water being poured down a mouth and throat. We had to walk for about half a mile over bridges as we were crossing a river. Once we got there, the view was amazing! We all took a lot of pictures. From this part, we could see the Brazilian side and rest of the river very well.

At one point, we heard lightening and thunder, and everyone's hair was standing on end from the electricity, so we decided it would be best if we made our way back. On the way, it started to pour again, and we got soaked, again. However, we made it back to the train in one piece.



After that adventure, we headed back for Brazil. We went back to the hotel, took a much-needed shower, and then got ready to go see the Itaipu dam. We got to the dam by taking a bus. Because we went after dark, there was a light show on the dam complete with music and everything. There, we learned that this was the second largest dam in the world, and that the dam was in neutral



territory between Paraguay and Brazil. Both countries use energy from the dam and work on it together.

For dinner that night, we went to an all-you-can eat pizza place. There were many pizzas with different flavors such as cream cheese and chicken, chicken stroganoff, and banana and cinnamon, which were fun to try and most of them were really delicious! There were also several more American-style flavors such as sausage and peppers and 4-cheese. Again, we stuffed ourselves again and slept very well that night.

Although these activities technically weren't nursing, we learned a lot from visiting these sites. Juli taught us about the different foods we were trying, and although some of them were different to our American taste buds, we tried everything and most of it was delicious. From this I learned that it is important to be open to different cultures, even if it means trying a chicken's heart or a pizza with bananas on it!



We also learned about the importance of collaboration, specifically when visiting the dam. It was interesting that the 2 countries work together to provide a beneficial service to their people. This is similar to nursing in that nurses must work with other professionals in the health care setting to put the needs of the patient first. Another experience that helped us learn cultural sensitivity was crossing the border. Because Argentina is a Spanish-speaking country, we realized how important it was for us to say "gracias" instead of the normal "obrigada" that we had been saying in Brazil. It is important to learn at least a few words of the country's native language in order to show respect for its citizens, as it can be with nursing when caring for a patient who may not speak the same language that you do. Although this may have been a mini vacation for us, we still learned valuable lessons that will help us in our future career as nurses!



