

MEDICAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM – CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

The Private Healthcare system in Cape Town is modern, efficient and is very much based on western standards, characterized by state-of-the-art hospitals and medical centres, and more than enough doctors and nurses to provide individual attention to patients. However, private healthcare is extremely expensive and only affordable to a small percentage of the population.



The remainder of the population rely and depend on public/government hospitals and clinics. While these facilities are a lot cheaper, the lack of quality is clear for all to see. Government facilities are always heavily under-staffed, and lack the necessary funding and infrastructure to cope with the high number of patients served on a daily basis. Besides the lack of doctors and nurses, shortages of admin staff often results in extremely long patient waiting-times (time from arrival at the facility to the time they actually see the doctor).

Participants on the Cape Town Medical Volunteer program are placed at local public day clinics, instead of large hospitals. There are no overnight patients here and no major medical operations or procedures are performed here.

GOODWOOD COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Project Supervisor: Sister Elma Shy

Background:

This clinic is a government/public day hospital located in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, and is one of the oldest clinics in Cape Town. It provides a wide range of medical services (GP, dental, Baby clinic, etc.) to those members of the community who cannot afford private healthcare. The clinic focuses on HIV/AIDS and TB-related illnesses and often run awareness programmes in this regard. Patients with more serious injuries or illness are referred to one of the nearby government hospitals.

Due to funding and staff shortages, volunteers (local and international) play a vital role at this facility and are always greatly appreciated. The additional help provides much-needed relief to the local staff and cuts patient waiting-times drastically.

Volunteer Duties:

- Assist patients in getting them from one service point to another correctly.
- Prep Room duties such as blood and urine testing, taking temperature and weight readings, small wound treatment, etc.
- General assistance of medical staff where required and where experience and expertise allow
- Assist on other areas within the clinic such as the pharmacy and baby-clinic.

- Help with creating and running special awareness and information programmes e.g. HIV/Aids, Diabetes, TB, etc.
- Admin/Reception duties: managing and updating patient files, stock-take in the pharmacy, etc.
- General Observation in doctors rooms, in order to see how things are done differently to your home country.

Volunteer Requirements:

- Minimum age of 18 years
- Must have a keen interest in the medical field (medical students preferred, but not compulsory)
- Qualification level and length of volunteer period will often determine your duties and responsibilities at the clinic. Trust between yourself and the local staff is established over time and they will get to learn your strengths and weaknesses, and assign you duties accordingly.
- Volunteers need to be open-minded and prepared to assist wherever needed at the specific time. E.g. during certain periods, the clinic may require help with admin/reception duties more than in the prep-room or baby clinic... be prepared to serve where needed.



General Working Hours:

08:00 – 14:00