**International Clinical Internships in Cameroon**

**General Info about the ICDR-Cameroon Group**

The ICDR-Cameroon group of the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR) at the University of Toronto is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities in the North West Region (NWR) of Cameroon through disability and rehabilitation-focused education and research. Education of student health professionals is one part of the group’s work.

**General Info about the Placement**

ICDR-Cameroon has been supporting Canadian occupational therapy students to have placements in NWR since 2004. For the past several placements, students have been based in the city of Bamenda and have had a placement shared between 2 small organizations: 3-4 days per week at the Saint Joseph's Children and Adult Home (SAJOCAH) rehabilitation centre doing individual and group therapy, and 1-2 days per week with the Bamenda Coordinating Centre for Studies in Disability and Rehabilitation (BCCSDR), doing community development work. We have found that the placement works best when the first week is a structured orientation, and that it generally takes another 2 weeks or so for students to learn enough about the context of practice to feel comfortable. Therefore placements should be a minimum of 7 weeks. These organizations often have a few other international students and professionals present, which contributes to the learning experience.

**Population**

The population at SAJOCAH Centre is all ages. Many of the clients are preschool and school aged children with a range of impairments and developmental delays (including cognitive, physical and sensory motor) or orthopaedic conditions. Adults have a range of neurological conditions such as stroke and spinal cord injury. Conditions vary at different times of the year.

At the BCCSDR, students generally interact with adults - disabled people’s organizations and disability activists in the region. During the November-December period, students participate in the annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation.

**Type of Practice**

SAJOCAH is a rehabilitation centre for children and adults primarily focused on motor and neurological conditions. There are staff physiotherapists and PT assistants. (<http://sajocahforhope.org/index.php>)

The BCCSDR engages in community and program development and education to improve services and support in the NWR for individuals with all types of disabilities, including blindness, deafness, mobility impairment, mental illness, and disabilities related to long term and cyclical illnesses (e.g. AIDS).

**Cost (Including Accommodations, $US)**

Students are responsible for all costs of this placement. Flights are between $2000-2500, hotel in Douala, and ground transportation from the airport to Bamenda is about $200. In Bamenda, students stay at a small guest home hotel on the same compound as the BCCSDR and costs about $200 per month. Each student has a private room with bathroom, use of a simple shared kitchen and internet access. Students are responsible for paying for their food, and the grocery prices are variable depending on personal choice. Students are also responsible for transportation costs within the city (about $0.30/taxi ride), and to SAJOCAH (depending on choice of vehicle, from $2/day to over $60/day).

**Partners**

In addition to the BCCSDR and SAJOCAH, students will have opportunity to learn about several other partner organizations in the region.

**Supervision**

As there are no resident occupational therapists in the region, supervision is provided by a Canadian supervisor. Up to four OT students are selected to take part in this placement. The supervisor is generally present for at least the second and third weeks of the placement (sometimes longer), and the students complete the remainder of the placement independently, with supervision provided by email and Skype. As a result, prospective students are required to demonstrate strong motivation and self-initiation skills.

**Typical Day**

SAJOCAH: Students will be expected at the centre by 8:00 a.m. Students work on individual caseloads (usually about 4-5 clients), and also do group therapy with children or adults. They will have the opportunity to complete assessment and treatment plans for individual clients and provide consultation services for PTs and other health professionals. Students will offer workshops to students, teachers and parents that include topics such as cognitive assessment and play therapy.

BCCSDR: Days at the BCCSDR are variable and usually include community meetings, workshops, and/ or writing.

**Disclaimers/Precautions (If Any)**

• Students will be immersed in a very different culture with prominent issues such as homophobia, entrenched gender roles, polygamy, and poverty

• Students with allergies or dietary restrictions should ensure they will have appropriate food choices while in Cameroon (note: peanuts are very common in the food in Cameroon)

• Students will undertake a rustic lifestyle i.e. several bugs, limited access to running water and electricity

For more information please contact Lynn Cockburn, ICDR-Cameroon at l.cockburn@utoronto.ca