

Shanti Medical Clinic, Chitre

The Clinic

The clinic is situated in Chitre, a rural village in the Annapurna mountain range in Nepal. It was built and is funded by Himalayan Projects. It is staffed by a Nepalese 'Community Medical Assistant' who has had one year formal training. She lives in the clinic building, providing a 24 hour service to patients including home visits. The clinic has an examination room with a large couch, a dental chair and an obstetric birthing table with lithotomy supports.

There is no charge for consultations, however, medication or equipment is purchased by the patient (unless the medicine is provided by the WHO or government for free). The nearest hospitals are in Beni and Pokhara.

The Population

Chitre has a population of approximately 150 and the clinic also serves surrounding villages. Few people speak English (mainly younger people or those involved with tourism), however, the Community Medical Assistant has a good level of English and knowledge of medical terms.

Pathology

The types of disease that you will see are very similar to any general practice. Respiratory, gastrointestinal and obstetric presentations were the most common alongside acute and chronic pain. There is a role for physiotherapy in the village especially for the common complaint of lower back pain.

Challenges

- Untreated and often undiagnosed chronic conditions, especially cardiovascular and respiratory.
- Obstetric safety.
- The burden of untreated urological problems such as lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in elderly gentlemen and prolapse in women.
- Local health beliefs and understanding of disease and medication: many people do not know about viruses and bacteria and have the impression that medication will instantly cure disease. Concordance with medication courses can also be an issue.

Interventions

- Education:
 - Adults
 - Children: at both local primary and secondary schools
 - The Community Medical Assistant is receptive to new ideas and ways of working.
- Introduction of simple screening/bedside tests (for example urine dipstick testing and capillary blood glucose).
- Your own ideas.

Volunteers

Anyone with medical, nursing or dental training who is willing to help in this rural community will have a great impact! I would recommend volunteering in Chitre to anyone who is either passionate to help communities such as Chitre, has past experience in similar situations or anyone considering their medical elective.

General Advice

Language - I thoroughly suggest learning some basic Nepali before coming to Chitre.

Travel - There are many ways to get to Chitre even if you do not want to walk. Ask Himalayan Projects for more information.

Accommodation and food - is excellent and provided at an extremely modest price.

Good luck, and have a fantastic time!