Cartagena: where Science and History encounter.

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Being part of the XXIX Summer of Scientific and Technological Research of the Pacific marked a milestone in my academic and professional development. During this experience, I had the opportunity to participate in an academic exchange in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, where I presented my research on tuberculosis. This city, with its colonial atmosphere and vibrant culture, became the ideal scenario to spread knowledge, explore new perspectives, and strengthen my inner compromise with science. Led by the accessibility and professionalism of Jaime, the project leader, I submerged myself in the fascinating scientific investigation field. His disposition to sharing experiences and meticulous perspective taught us not only the steps to investigate but also integrated the passion within it. This participation highlighted profoundly my tuberculosis understanding and the significance of scientific investigation.

Arriving in Cartagena was an accomplishment that marked my journey. I had been selected to represent my university, which involved not only months of hard work but also the responsibility of discussing and contributing to a global issue. My scientific article presented new perspectives on early diagnosis and prevention strategies for tuberculosis, a disease that remains vital and urgent. Tuberculosis has accompanied humanity since ancient times; nevertheless, in many regions of the world, it continues to be a complex challenge.

Throughout my investigation, I submerged myself in the social and economic impact (especially on vulnerable populations) of tuberculosis. Cartagena with its history of resilience and overcoming turned out to be the ideal place to deliver these findings, since its narrative reflects the perception of confronting adversity wisely.

In the main auditorium, surrounded by brilliant minds and passionate hearts, I presented the findings of my research. The nervous anticipation I felt as I took the stage quickly dissolved when I saw the attendees' genuine interest. Each question, and each comment, reminded me of why I love medicine: because it has the power to connect people in a collective effort to improve lives. A highlighting moment of my experience in Cartagena was when I had the opportunity to enter an operating room at a local hospital. There, I participated in a biopsy of a tuberculosis patient, who was a homeless person from the city's main streets. This encounter deeply amazed me, not only because of the clinical aspect of the procedure but also due to the social reality surrounding it.

It was an impactful reminder of the multiple layers of vulnerability faced by those suffering from this disease, and it reinforced my commitment to working toward holistic health solutions. These interactions were a reminder that science knows no borders and that every contribution, no matter how small it may seem, can make a difference.

Cartagena provided me with more than academic knowledge, in its cobblestone streets I encountered stories of resilience that resonated with my own experience. On a particular afternoon, walking through Getsemaní, a mural stood in front of me with "future is built with footprints of the past" written on it. That phrase echoed my entire trip, constantly reminding me that every step in the medical investigation is built with the effort of who precedes us.

My exchange experience also allowed me to build connections with students and professionals who shared my concerns. From passionate debates on health innovation to exploring local gastronomy, every interaction expanded my perspectives and demonstrated the importance of international collaboration. It was through more casual exchanges that ideas emerged, which I hope will eventually materialize into shared projects focused on addressing global health challenges. One particularly memorable experience was when I visited a local hospital and witnessed how health challenges are confronted within a health system different from my own. The dedication of the medical staff, despite limitations, was truly inspiring and led me to reflect on how much we can learn from one another.

At the end of my exchange, watching the sunset over the bay, I realized that Cartagena had given me more than just knowledge. It taught me that research is not just about numbers and data, but about human stories; that individual effort finds meaning when it becomes part of a collective purpose; and that the medical path, although challenging, is filled with rewards for those with passion and commitment. Back home, I'm leaving with not only a scientific article but also a vivid passion to keep contributing to the medical field and a deep gratitude for having been part of an experience that transcended every boundary that ever existed in my mind.

Cartagena de Indias stayed carved on my heart. Where science and history were encountered to reveal a new perspective on the meaning of being a doctor and citizen of the world. The exchange was not only a personal success but also an affirmation that medical investigation can transform lives.

I hope that my experience inspires students to seek similar opportunities and to remember that, although challenges may be significant, the impact we can achieve as a global community is infinitely greater.