The impact of the Health System in Costa Rica

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Introduction

The Health System in Costa Rica is considered one of the pillars of Costa Rica's democracy and has impacted the human development indices achieved by the country. This course will allow students to get to know the health care system’s historical development and current situation. The course also explores the major challenges faced by the system, as there are changes in the epidemiological profile of the population, access of various sectors of the population to health care, and economic sustainability.

Learning Goals

1) Learn the historical development, current status and challenges of the Costa Rican health system.
2) Participation in the assigned study topics.
3) Know the epidemiological profiles and the principal emerging diseases of Costa Rica.
4) Carry out an internship related to health in a rural area.
5) Perform a literature review of a health issue of Costa Rica.
6) Compare and contrast the health model of Costa Rica with the United States.

Evaluation (100 pts.)

The students will be assessed through the following activities:

1) Presentation on doctors who have contributed in the field of health (10 pts.)
2) Report on the lessons learned during the rural volunteer internship (20 pts.)
3) Opinion article on what is observed in the tours and review of the literature (20 pts.)
4) Oral presentation of a news article on health published in the newspaper (15 pts.)
5) Literature review on a topic on health in Costa Rica (final draft, 25 pts.)
6) Class participation (10 pts.)

Description of course assessment

1) Presentation on doctors who have contributed in the field of health. Each student selects one of the proposed medical research doctors and prepares an activity to share the information with the class. (Dr. Solon Núñez, Dr. Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, Dr. Clodomiro Picado, Dr. Ricardo Moreno Canas, Dr. Guillermo Castro Padilla)

The activity is evaluated; there is no need to submit written work.

Date: Thursday August 28

2) Report of the lessons learned during the rural volunteer internship. Each student will spend 4 weeks living with a family in a rural community. For this course, the student will be linked to a health care facility where they will participate on a task agreed upon for those weeks. Each student must communicate each week with the professor via e-mail to share impressions, concerns or needs.

September 18: PowerPoint presentation on the location in which the rural internship will be held.
September 25: notify the professor of the agreed upon tasks, internship schedule, and other important details.

October 9: communicate important details to the professor.

October 17: draft report of the rural internship.

October 2: delivery of final written version of report and oral presentation.

3) Delivery of opinion article on the tours. As part of the activities we are going to visit the three levels of health care: EBAIS, Area of Health and Hospital, and Ministry of Health. These visits will allow students to observe the work in each of these institutions. Each student should write an article reporting what is observed and its relationship with the literature of the course. The article should be one page (2 sides of a sheet). You can put textual quotations to support your own ideas.

Date: Tuesday November 13

4) Oral Presentation of a news story about health in Costa Rica. Each student will choose a news story published in the newspaper La Nacion on a major topic of health and then report it to the class.

Date: Thursday October 30

5) Literature review on a health issue. In accordance with their interests, each student selects a topic related to the health system in Costa Rica. Each student will need to perform a literature review and present the report both in writing and orally to share with the class.

September 11: Delivery of chosen theme (2 pts)

October 2: Delivery of final proposal (3 pts)

November 6: Delivery of first draft (4 pts)

November 20: Delivery of final version of project (8 pts)

November 25: Presentation (PowerPoint) of final project (8 pts)

Some suggested topics
- Climate Change and its effect on health.
- Challenges facing the health system in Costa Rica
- Economic sustainability of the Costa Rican Social Security System.
- Preparation of the health services before an outbreak of the Ebola virus in Costa Rica.
- History of Public Health in Latin America.
- The meaning of the principle of universality in Health
- Water quality in Costa Rica.

Note: another topic may be chosen after consulting with Dr. Alfaro before September 8.

6) Course participation. The success of the course and its utilization is a shared responsibility between students and professor. Therefore, participation in class is important and thus contributing ideas, commenting and asking questions during the tours and rural internship, discussing ideas, and enriching the dynamic of the course is a commitment of the entire group.
**Calendar (16 weeks-32 session)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| Thursday August 21          | Presentation of the teachers and students  
Review of the program of the course  
Explanation of course assessment  
Expectations of the course  
Introduction to the course.                                                                                                                        |
| Tuesday August 26           | Historical development of social medicine in Costa Rica  
Dr. Alfaro                                                                                                                                                |
| Thursday August 28          | **Students presentations:** Great doctors who have contributed in the field of medicine in Costa Rica  
Dr. Solon Núñez, Dr. Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, Dr. Clodomiro Picado, Dr. Ricardo Moreno Canas, Dr. Guillermo Castro Padilla (each student selects one)  
National Health System in Costa Rica: objectives and structure (Dr. Alfaro)                                                                                       |
| Tuesday September 2         | *Visit Ministry of Health, governing body of health in Costa Rica, from 1pm to 3pm                                                                                                                      |
| Thursday September 4        | *Visit Ministry of Health, functions of the governing body of health in Costa Rica, from 1pm to 3pm                                                                                                       |
| Tuesday September 9         | Current status of Costa Rica health and epidemiological profile of the population (Dr. Alfaro)  
Information on the places chosen for the academic internship                                                                                             |
| Thursday, September 11      | Organizational services for patient care, according to levels of care or service networks of the Social System of Costa Rica. (Dr. Alfaro)                                                                  |
| Tuesday, September 16       | Emerging diseases in Costa Rica: current situation, monitoring and management (Dr. Alfaro)                                                                                                              |
| Thursday, September 18      | Presentation by the students on the geographical background of the location of the rural internship.  
Final guidance to the rural volunteer internship.                                                                                                                                                      |
| Monday September 22         | Volunteer rural internship begins  
Meeting with the leadership that will support the student in their rural volunteer internship (Dr. Alfaro)                                                                                           |
| Monday 22 September to 17 October | Rural volunteer internship                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Monday, September 22        | Meeting with the leadership that will support the student in their rural volunteer internship (Dr. Alfaro)                                                                                               |
| Friday, October 17          | Completes the rural volunteer internship                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Tuesday October 21         | Delivery of the final report on the lessons learned in the rural internship.  
Each student presents (with PowerPoint) their experience and the lessons learned during 10 minutes.                                                                                                     |
| Thursday October 23         | Financing of the health system in Costa Rica  
Assigned Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday October 28</td>
<td>*Visit to an area of health and an EBAIS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday October 30</td>
<td>Students present and discuss a news story on Health in Costa Rica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday November 4</td>
<td>*Visit a hospital</td>
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<td>Thursday November 6</td>
<td>The role of the National Institute of Insurance in the Health Sector</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reading assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday November 11</td>
<td>Epidemiological profile of chronic diseases in Costa Rica</td>
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<td>Thursday November 13</td>
<td>Student presentations: Personal observations made during the tours conducted (Ministry of Health, Health Care Area and EBAIS, and Hospital)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday November 18</td>
<td>Participation of students in a discussion on a comparison between the health system of the United States and Costa Rica.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 20</td>
<td>Panel of Experts: students participate in a debate about what should be changed in the Costa Rican Social Security System, Ministry of Health, National Institute of Insurance as part of the health sector (involves students of the course; one student moderates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday November 25</td>
<td>Presentation (with PowerPoint) of final project (15 min. each student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday November 27</td>
<td>Close of the semester. Thanksgiving Lunch</td>
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* Dress professionally: no shorts, t-shirts, tennis shoes, flip-flops, etc.

**Guidelines for the rural volunteer internship**

**Purpose:** interact with an institution of rural health in order to know their functions and carry out voluntary work according to the needs of the institute.

**Role of the intern:** join an institution of rural health to bring ones’ own experience, knowledge, time and support to any task assigned as agreed upon with the director of the institute.

**Information to the professor:** provide the task that is going to be performed, hours of work and the characterization of the geographical location. Describe the different instances of the health sector that exist in the place, availability of public and private sectors, epidemiological characterization of the population, and the epidemiological profile of the institute.
**Health care institutions: Rural volunteer Internship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Main Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Area of the Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Garabito</td>
<td>Governing Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ebais</td>
<td>Venicia</td>
<td>Care and Prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cenai</td>
<td>Venicia</td>
<td>Institution children nursery and dining room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Cross</td>
<td>Guapiles</td>
<td>Pre hospital care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home for the Elderly</td>
<td>Quebrada Ganado</td>
<td>Center for older adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer vector control</td>
<td>Orotina</td>
<td>Work on control of <em>Aedes aegypti</em></td>
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**Online bibliographic resources**

- Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social (http://www.ccss.sa.cr/)
- Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (http://www.aya.go.cr/).
- Instituto Nacional de Seguros de Costa Rica (http://www.ins-cr.com/).
- Ministry of Health (http://www.ministeriodesalud.go.cr/)
- Pan American Health Organization (http://www.paho.org/)
- University of Costa Rica (http://www.ucr.ac.cr/).
- National University (http://www.una.ac.cr/).
- World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/).
- State University for Distance Learning (UNED) (http://www.uned.ac.cr/).