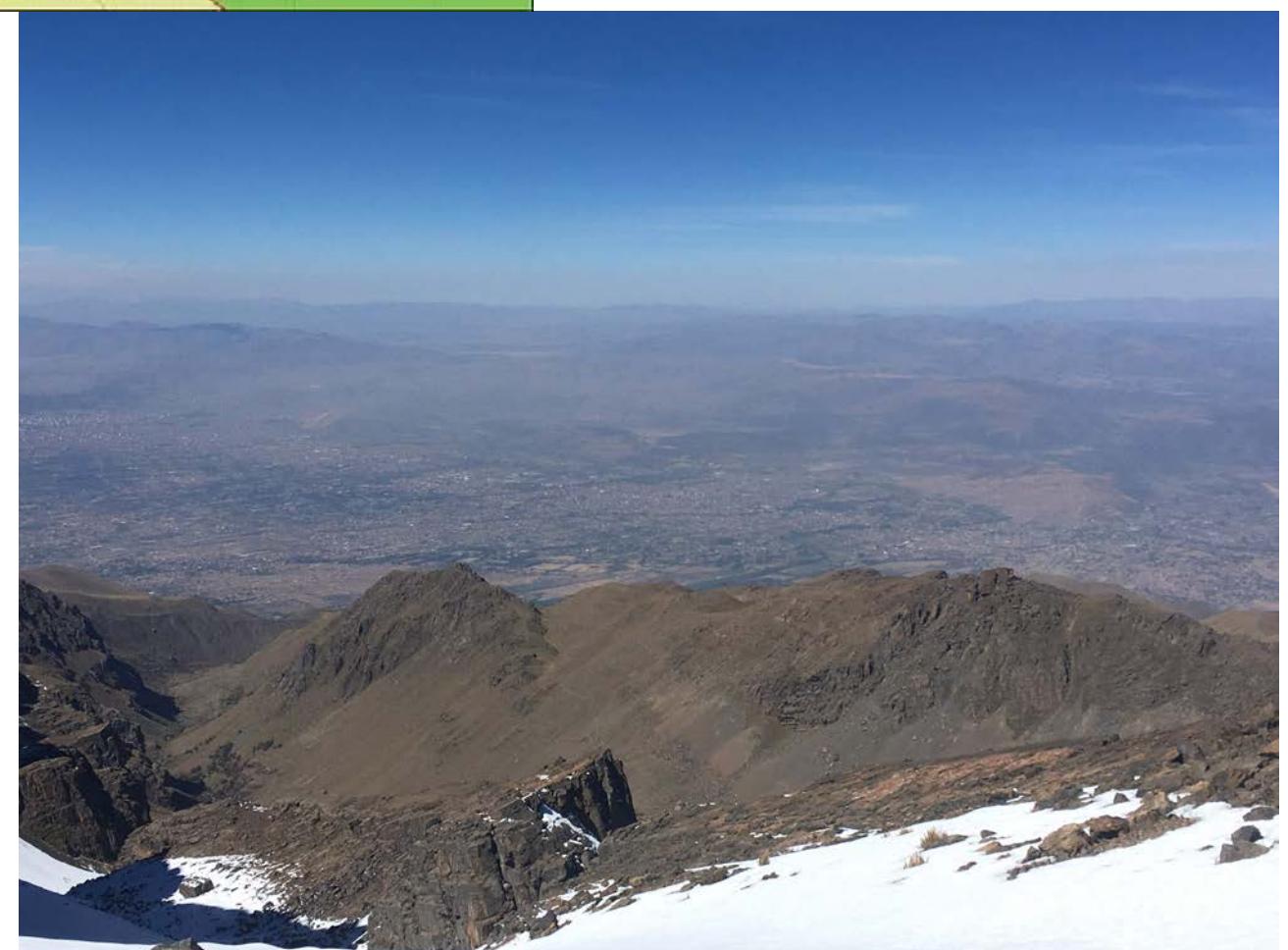


Background

El Instituto para el Desarrollo Humano (“Institute for Human Development,” IDH) is an organization located in Cochabamba, Bolivia, that is dedicated to improving society through developing sectors related to health, the environment, and human rights. One of its programs focuses on sexual health, particularly strengthening the response to HIV/AIDS. Aspects of this program include providing outpatient clinical services for about 200 patients and educating schools and healthcare workers. In addition, IDH undertakes clinical research to better understand how to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS patients living in Cochabamba.



Objectives of Summer Experience

The primary goal of my time in Bolivia was to assist IDH with their ongoing clinical research projects. One research project that I worked on studied the relationship between patients' adherence to ART and aspects of their sexual, romantic, and personal life. I also created posters in English and in Spanish for a publication on decreasing viral load through Therapeutic Education, researched and designed pamphlets for both patients and healthcare workers that explained the unique challenges faced by HIV patients as they aged, and investigated the possibility of IDH introducing an SMS system to remind patients to take their ART and of appointment times.

The secondary goals of my time in Bolivia were to learn about caring for HIV/AIDS patients in a developing country, and support IDH in other aspects of their health program.



Members of the healthcare team of IDH at a Wallball tournament to support the LGBT community

Opportunities for Future Students

- Continue work on Adherence to ART project
- Design SMS reminder system for IDH

Research on Adherence to ART: Current Status

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship in patients seen at IDH between adherence to ART and satisfactory sexual life and emotional connection to partners. The study also looked at other variables such as social support from family and friends after the diagnosis of HIV and throughout treatment with antiretrovirals, lifestyle choices regarding alcohol and drug use, past sexual and romantic experiences, and frequency of use of psychologists at IDH.

All patients seen at IDH for HIV treatment were eligible for this study. Those who wished to participate were interviewed by a psychologist. I assisted in collecting interviews and in database entry. Currently 35 patients have been interviewed; the total goal for the study to achieve statistical significance is 126.

Research on Adherence to ART: Next Steps

- Complete patient interviews and entry into database
- Examine data for statistically significant relationships between variables in personal life and adherence to ART
- Perform qualitative analysis