

## Kat Twentyman (P09-14) – Trip to the Indian Himalayas

This August I travelled to northernmost India to complete my medical elective. As part of my elective I trekked with a group to deliver healthcare to the villages of the Zaskar Valley in the Indian Himalayas. These villages are cut off in the mountains for 7 months a year due to harsh weather conditions making routes in and out impassable. As such the healthcare available is relatively limited - the nearest hospital is 3 days travel away! We had to complete a strenuous hike to even get into the valley (reaching about 5700m at the highest point), and then once in the valley we then alternated days between hiking between villages and delivering clinics.

I worked in a team of about 20 healthcare professionals, ranging from medical students to consultants, that provided a basic health service tailored to the population's medical needs. The medical care was wide-ranging and could be most closely compared to general practice. Common conditions that we saw included musculoskeletal problems stemming from the hard-manual labour of most villagers' livelihoods, and irritant eye problems as a result of excessive exposure to dust or UV light. In such an extreme environment the service was necessarily basic, with limited medicines and equipment, compared to western health services. Nonetheless, this is a valuable service that provides health support in an area where provision is sparse.

The elective was a really great opportunity to experience a challenging environment, see first-hand how this affects the health of those who live there and try to address these issues effectively. I also got to see some stunning scenery and meet lots of wonderful and kind people. Thank you very much to the OFs for your generous support in this endeavour.



The team at 5700m



Looking down into the valley