

## Field Experience: Matlab—a day in the life of a medical student



ICDDR,B offers a unique opportunity to students from within Bangladesh and around the world. In her diary of a day at Matlab, Jessica Sayre, a fourth year medical student from the University of Vermont in the United States, captures what it is all about.

**8:30am** Fresh flatbread, omelettes, lentils, vegetables, and sweet rice pudding. Yum! Over breakfast, chat with Dr Sharif, a medical officer from ICDDR,B in Dhaka, and Mary, charge nurse from the Longer Stay Unit in Dhaka.

**9:15am** To the hospital. Matlab campus includes a guest house, hospital, prenatal care offices, research offices and mosque, all surrounded by beautiful rice paddies. Tour Long Stay Unit with Dr Sharif: most patients are infants with malnutrition and diarrhoea, and complicating conditions, such as electrolyte imbalances and pneumonia. One new patient, who came in overnight presents with three days of acute watery diarrhoea, fever, moderate

dehydration and severe hypernatremia. We calculate the best way to fluid resuscitate her while bringing down her serum sodium slowly. Dr Sharif is worried that she will have convulsions if the sodium level drops too precipitously. We'll keep a close eye on her through the day.

**10:30am** Dr Sharif sits us down for a teaching session—fluid management in severely malnourished children presenting with dehydration.

**11:30am** My interest is pediatrics, so I head to the Kangaroo Maternal Care (KMC) ward where they take care of premature and low birth-weight neonates. Instead of using incubators, the ward is kept warm and infants kept between mothers' breasts until they are healthy enough to be discharged. KMC Ward has been very successful in reducing infant mortality.

**1:00pm** Lunch in the hospital canteen, far from the crowded, busy streets of Dhaka!

**3:00pm** Afternoon rounds with Dr Sharif. Infant with hypernatremia begins convulsing, nurses quickly administer diazepam and phenobarbital.

**4:00pm** Mary, nurse from Dhaka, takes us on a tour of surrounding villages, including home of Parboti, a nurse at the Matlab Hospital.

**8:00pm** Dinner in the guest house with Mary and Dr Sharif.

**9:00pm** Final ward round with Dr Sharif—infant with hypernatremia is doing well and has not had any more convulsions.

**10:00pm** A long, but fulfilling day. Goodnight.