

50 133 000
inhabitants♂ 54 yrs ♀ 55 yrs
life expectancy9.2 %
of GDP for health7.7
doctors/10 000 people

STUDYING MEDICINE IN...

Pretoria, South Africa

Amy Chapman (22) is a third year medical student at the University of Pretoria (fondly known as Tuks to its students), South Africa

How is university life in South Africa?

South Africa presents many unique challenges when it comes to the health care environment. South African medicine and teaching is very practically focused as students need to become adept quickly due to the fact that each and every health care practitioner will be needed. As students, we are exposed to much more risky situations in comparison to students from other countries. Simply put, it is because the incidence of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis co-infection, is much higher than in other countries. Overall, studying in South Africa prepares a student for any eventuality. Our doctors are capable, resourceful and able to cope under immense pressure.

What do you think is the best part of medical education in South Africa?

Our practical experience is the best part of our education. At Tuks, students already move into the clinical field in their first year. This consists of visiting clinics and performing skills such as injections and drawing blood. The patient interaction and opportunity to see first-hand medicine in action is invaluable in later years.

If you could change one thing in the medical education in South Africa, what would that be?

In order for the medical degree to be internationally recognized, all students have to complete a basic sciences component. Subjects

include physics, chemistry, philosophy and sociology. I didn't really enjoy it and couldn't wait to get into the "real" work of medicine – physiology, anatomy, histology, pathology etc. I think that this is how the degree is structured and so students have to take the bad with the good.

What is the biggest difference between studying medicine in South Africa and other countries?

The importance placed on your responsibility to the community. When studying in South Africa, all the lecturers make clear how important it is that we do something back for our country and how it will be up to us to make a change in what could be seen as our ailing health-care system.

Is it financially possible for everyone to study medicine in South Africa?

Yes. Many universities offer bursaries to outstanding students. In addition, respective health departments from various provinces offer bursaries, based on students working to pay back the bursary after completing the degree. There is ample support from government and university sides. We also have a student financial aid program.

What are your plans after graduating?

After graduating, I will work as an intern for 2 years and complete my one year of obligatory community service after that. Currently, I have no other plans yet due to the fact that the first three years of my degree have not given me a specialty of interest. I am interested in working with "Doctors Without Borders" or on the Health train perhaps. I know that I will continue to work in South Africa as I love it with all my heart!