

Whiteriver Indian Health Service Medical Student and Resident Rotation Essential Information

Introduction

The Whiteriver United States Public Health Service Indian Health Service Hospital is a 40 bed inpatient and outpatient facility serving the 14,000 members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Whiteriver Hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission on Healthcare Organizations, and its satellite clinic, Cibecue Health Center (50 miles South-West), is also JCAHO accredited.

The primary care teaching staff at Whiteriver consists of twenty-one physicians in the specialties of family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, medicine/pediatrics and emergency medicine. The medical staff also includes ten mid-level providers, a podiatrist, a part-time orthopedist, and part-time general surgeon. We provide inpatient and outpatient adult and pediatric care, obstetrical services, and emergency care.

Whiteriver has an average inpatient census of 14 adults and children, an average daily clinic load of 70-100 patients, and approximately 5 vaginal deliveries per month. The Whiteriver Emergency Department sees 40,000 patients annually, and the facility transports over 1000 patients by air to in-state metropolitan areas each year.

Rotation Requirements

4th year Medical students in good standing from accredited US medical schools and 3rd year residents from accredited US residency programs who have had no prior violations of the law (including misdemeanors, probations, etc) may participate in a four to six week rotation once clearing a background check. We do accept some 3rd year medical students and some 2nd year residents with prior approval through current contractual agreements. We are able to accommodate up to three students/residents each month.

Application

All students and residents must produce documentation stating they are in good standing and will be covered by malpractice insurance during the rotation. Documentation of immunizations including MMR, Varicella, Flu, PPD and Hepatitis B are required. A “volunteer” packet must be completed prior to the rotation and received at least 90 days prior to the rotation.

Students/residents who do not submit the required forms 90 days before the rotation are subject to cancellation. Students and residents will also be required to submit their fingerprints and undergo a background check. Failure to provide these or pass the background check will result in the cancellation of their rotation. Students/residents should assure their school/program provides an evaluation form for Whiteriver physicians to complete and should send this along with the application documents at least 90 days prior to their start date.

Instruction

Primary instruction will be by one-on-one preceptorship with board certified staff members. Some didactic lectures are presented at the hospital, and multiple “telemedicine” conferences are available from the University of Arizona and Banner Hospitals.

The Whiteriver Clinical Experience

According to the Center for Disease Control: “Of all racial/ethnic populations, American Indians/Alaska Natives have the highest poverty rates (26%)—a rate that is twice the national rate. Coincident with these socioeconomic burdens are persistent, and often increasing, health

disparities.” (See reference below.) For example, “ the rates of injuries, diabetes, and bronchiolitis were two to three times as high among American Indians/Alaska Natives...” as compared with the US general population. You will help care for people with these health conditions, in addition to other pediatric infectious disease and alcohol-related disease. Students/residents will participate in the full spectrum of pediatric, adult, and obstetrical care. Primary care clinics form the core of our outpatient services and are supplemented by visiting consultants in multiple specialties. (Reference- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Health Disparities Experienced by American Indians and Alaska Natives. MMWR 2003;52:697-713)

The Whiteriver Cultural Experience

You will be working with the people of the White Mountain Apache tribe and living on their reservation, a 1.6 million acre area covered by forested mountain terrain. We hope that you will have the opportunity to experience the culture of the Apache people. One such opportunity is the traditional Apache Sunrise dance, which celebrates the coming-of-age of young Apache women, and takes place most weekends from April to September. The tribe also hosts a large rodeo Labor Day weekend. Students/residents are asked to visit the tribe’s Cultural Center and Museum near historic Fort Apache. Additionally, we have collected a cultural reading library in the student house, which includes work by and about Native American peoples in general and the Apache people in particular. For historical and cultural reading, consider the following resources:

Don’t Let the Sun Step Over You by Eva Tulene Watt (A White Mountain Apache Family Life, 1860-1975)

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

<http://www.wmat.nsn.us/>

<http://www.wmat.us/wmahistory.shtml>

<http://www.wmat.us/wmaculture.shtml>

<http://www.saa.org/Publications/saabulletin/15-5/SAA17.html>

<http://www.preserveamerica.gov/3-18-04PAcommunity-whitemountainapachetribeAZ.html>

Further resources, books and references, are available for use in the Student house during your clerkship. Books and references may also be purchased, if desired, at the local Fort Apache Museum.

Upon Arrival/First Day

A key and map to the student house will be available to you at the ER sign in window when you arrive (day and night, including weekends). Be sure to email me your planned day of arrival ahead of time to ensure it is waiting for you. Plan on reporting to the hospital at 8 am for the first day of the rotation. Instructions on where to meet will be with your key.

Schedules

Schedules are determined upon arrival. They are usually organized to include one week each on the inpatient service (including OB), the clinic, the emergency room, and in Cibecue. This schedule is flexible depending on the student/resident interest and on the number of rotating students/residents in each block.

Students/residents are asked to work one weekend evening shift (with most weekends available to explore the Southwest), and special schedule requests will be considered. You are not expected to work overnight, but will work evening ER shifts (students: 4pm-12 midnight; residents: 2pm-2am), since that is the busiest time in the ER.

Housing and Meals

Residents and students will be housed, in a three-bedroom house on the hospital compound. You will be asked to share accommodations, but not a room, with a member of the opposite sex.

The house is equipped with simple furniture, a kitchen, and most of the items you need to cook. Three meals per day are provided in the hospital cafeteria. Unfortunately, we are not able to reimburse for travel expenses. If you have strict dietary restrictions, plan on doing a lot of your own cooking.

Basic bedding and towels are provided. You are welcome to bring your own. The student house also has a washer and dryer. Cleaning supplies and household supplies are the students' responsibility, and students/residents should clean their own space and "pitch in" to care for the house. There is no maid service. The linens will need to be washed upon completion of your rotation. Please leave the house clean and ready for the next students when you leave.

There is a TV with poor reception (on good days you sort of get three channels), and a CD/DVD player. The local Apache radio station (KNNB 88.1 FM) is an interesting cultural experience and plays a wide variety of music. There is a phone in the house along with wireless internet. Cellular phone coverage is inconsistent on the mountain, so don't count on having cell phone service while you are here. It is carrier dependent.

Dress Code/ID

Students and residents should plan for a "business casual" dress. No ties necessary and lab coats are optional. Scrubs may be worn during the inpatient and ER weeks. Please bring your own. **Please bring your school/program ID.** You will be given a temporary ID until you have completed orientation.

Mail

Mail may be received at the hospital by clearly identifying the recipient (e.g. Ms. Jen Jones, medical student/resident), and addressing it to: Whiteriver IHS Hospital, PO Box 860, 200 W. Hospital Drive, Whiteriver, AZ 85941.

Computer Access

There is wireless internet in the student house. You will have to log onto one of the hospital's computers to access the internet within the hospital as there is not wireless within the hospital. Due to our small size and non-academic status, there is no library. However, there are a few reference books within the student house.

Getting to Whiteriver

This can be tricky. Whiteriver is a four-hour drive from Tucson. The hospital is 180 miles from Phoenix, and most out-of-state students choose to fly into Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, which is serviced by many major airlines. You are then faced with the choice of renting a car or using alternative transportation.

Car rentals can be expensive, especially if you are under 25 and/or don't have car insurance. Students in the recent past have spent \$800-\$1800 for a month. Most major car rental companies

rent out of Sky Harbor. Enterprise Rent-a-Car is the only national company with an office in nearby Show Low (40 minutes from Whiteriver), and they can be reached by calling 800-325-8007 or 928-537-5144. You might try to coordinate with another student rotating simultaneously in Whiteriver to reduce cost. Ask us for other student/resident contact information if this might work for you.

There is a lot to do in the Southwest, and feedback has indicated that students have really appreciated having the use of a car. Also, it can be difficult to get groceries or enjoy the nearby town of Pinetop without a car. You might feel “stranded” on the hospital compound. Nothing except the hospital is within walking distance from the student house on the hospital compound.

That being said, there are a number of ways to travel to Whiteriver without renting a car. White Mountain Passenger Lines runs a Monday-Saturday shuttle service from Phoenix to Show Low for \$45 (928-537-4539). Call for reservations ahead of time. A small airline, Great Lakes, flies daily from Phoenix to Show Low, for \$75-\$150 each way (1-800-554-5111 <http://www.greatlakesav.com>). Once in Show Low, Lakeside, Pinetop or Hondah you may take a cab to Whiteriver. I know one cab service in particular that can get you to Whiteriver. It is Mtn Cabs in Lakeside (928-368-8555). They run 7 days a week and their rate is \$2.50 up front then \$2.00/mile. Keep in mind these companies may close or go out of business and others may start up without prior notification. Plan ahead and refer to the internet. Please contact us if you have more questions about traveling to Whiteriver. Happy travels! (Fees are subject to change and some companies may only take cash)

For a detailed map and driving instructions try <http://maps.yahoo.com> or <http://maps.google.com> type in your starting point and your destination. The street address to the hospital is listed below. We are on Highway 77.

Climate

Whiteriver is at 5,290 feet in elevation. High summer temperatures approach the 90s, and freezing temperatures are routine at night from November to April. Expect rain in July and August (monsoons!), and snow from October to April. Bring warm clothes as the main local recreation areas--Pinetop, Show Low, and beyond--are at elevations of 7,000 -11,000 feet.

Shopping/Restaurants/Entertainment

Central Whiteriver (3 miles from the hospital) is home to a supermarket, a few convenience stores, a Wells Fargo bank, a post office and a workout facility which is open to the public. Pinetop/Lakeside, a 30 minute drive (and home for many of the medical staff), and nearby Show Low are larger areas with many kinds of shopping and entertainment, including two movie theaters, a Wal-Mart, and a large selection of restaurants.

Recreation

Whiteriver, the White Mountains, and the Southwest in general are phenomenal places to visit for a month. You can look forward to great hiking, fishing, boating, mountain-biking, and other activities almost year-round. In the winter, excellent skiing is 30 minutes from your door at Arizona’s largest ski resort, Sunrise, run by the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Numerous brochures and books about local outdoor adventure as well as hiking trail maps and such are located in the student/resident house.

Whiteriver is less than a four-hour drive from the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, Sedona, Canyon De Chelley, and many other Southwest experiences.

To learn more about the area, the tribe, weather, local recreation, and transportation check out these web sites:

<http://www.sunriseskipark.com>

<http://www.wmonline.com>

<http://www.wmat.nsn.us>

<http://www.367show.com>

<http://ci.pinetop-lakeside.az.us>

<http://www.hon-dah.com>

<http://www.toandfromtheairport.com/phoenix.html>

http://www.ihs.gov/FacilitiesServices/AreaOffices/Phoenix/phx_su_whiteriver.cfm

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