

English Version

We are four Yale students who are part of Student Partnerships for Global Health, an organization that has worked with Futuro Valdivia for the past few summers. Our primary interest this summer was to examine any associations between household dietary diversity, food insecurity, and BMI. To accomplish this goal, we performed over 250 surveys in the clinic; not only did we gather information about dietary diversity, food insecurity and BMI, but we also gathered basic household demographic information. We also conducted focus group interviews in multiple towns to learn more about the perception of health within the communities. It was great to engage with the local community in a more intimate environment!

Upon our arrival in Valdivia, we were immediately welcomed by the staff at Futuro Valdivia who did everything they could to help us with our research. They introduced us to the patients, explained words for local foods, and drew maps to help us find where to go!

In addition to our work, we were lucky enough to explore some of the beauty Ecuador has to offer. On the coast we went paragliding in San Pedro, snorkeling in Ayangué and hiking in Dos Mangas. We also hiked in Las Cajas National Park outside of Cuenca, went on a gondola ride in Quito and got to go canyoning and ziplining in Baños. None of us made it to the Amazon, although one member of our team did visit the Galapagos after we had completed our research.

We are currently analyzing the data we collected this summer, but we do have some preliminary findings. Our research indicated that an average 6-person household in the area has a monthly income of \$466, which is likely an overestimate given that most employment is not steady. The average BMI of the study population was 25.9, which falls in the category of “overweight,” with a large percentage falling in the “obese” category. Our survey found that only 5% of the households were food secure, whereas 32% were mildly food insecure, 31% were moderately food insecure, and 31% were severely food insecure. Overall, approximately 35% of people had dietary diversity scores in the lowest category, but that number was closer to 55% for people who were severely food insecure. Conversely, 13% of all participants had dietary diversity scores in the highest category, while only around 6% of severely food insecure people had high dietary diversity scores. These numbers highlight the fact that a lack of money inhibits both the quantity and diversity of food that people are able to buy.

Emma:

This summer gave me the opportunity to explore my interest in public health research for the first time. I loved getting to know the communities by interviewing people at Futuro Valdivia, which is such an integrated part of these communities. Everyone was willing to answer our questions, which really helped make me feel welcome in the community and made it much easier to get to know people. I was also able to practice and improve my Spanish, which I hope will help me in my future exploration of public health.

Etna:

Planning and implementing the research project allowed me to have first-hand experience with the obstacles that arise when conducting research abroad. Not only was it challenging to create a research project that would best serve a community that was foreign to me, but once created it was necessary to make tweaks to both the language and protocol in order to carry out a successful project. Working with clinic staff who are well known and respected by the community allowed for the research to be a success. Furthermore, working alongside dedicated team members helped ensure the success of the research project. Not only did this internship allow me to apply the concepts and skills I had learned in class into practice, but I was also able to witness the importance of building strong relationships.

Caroline:

This was my first experience doing public health research outside of my home country, and I am so thankful I was able to work with Futuro Valdivia for it. Their clinic is well respected in the local community, and their support allowed us to intimately engage with the local community. The staff was incredibly helpful in refining our project, as well as making us feel welcome in Ecuador. This summer improved my research and Spanish skills, inspired me with the impact one clinic may have, and reinforced my dedication to this field and the communities we seek to serve.

Peter:

Our work this summer with Futuro Valdivia was a truly remarkable experience. Our team was humbled by the incredibly warm welcome we received, and we looked forward each day to being able to work alongside and learn from Futuro Valdivia's incredibly knowledgeable and compassionate clinicians. I am so glad to have had the chance to get to know and become a part of this wonderful community. I look forward to new ways to continue to build and strengthen this health partnership.



Speaking with members of the Casas Viejas community / Hablando con gente de Casas Viejas



Caroline and Emma preparing for a focus group interview / Caroline y Emma preparando para una entrevista con un grupo focal



On our last day of work / Nuestro ultimo día de trabajo