

Observation Assessment #1

Topic: Final product

Over the past couple of weeks, I have been working closely with my mentor and cardiac surgeon Dr. Aldo Rafael on putting together another trip to Lima, Peru for a cardiac medical mission team called Salvando Corazones. This team of cardiac specialists from around the DFW area goes to Lima twice a year to perform open-heart surgeries on underserved indigenous people from all over the country of Peru. Dr. Rafael started this medical mission in 2012 and has been going back to his home country every year since to help those in dire need of sophisticated and specialized medical attention.

Last year for my final product, I made patient education packets for the patients undergoing operations in Peru so that they would have something to take home and reference when they don't have a physician close by. This year, I have been working more directly with Dr. Rafael to actually plan the trip and the activities that surround it. Originally, I had planned to also go on the trip with the team but due to the large group of physicians that is already going, that did not end up working out.

When Ellie (my mentor) and I first began working on this trip, we were very excited because it was both an opportunity for me to get some real-world experience as a project manager and for us to help a great cause. As we progressed through the first couple weeks, it became more and more apparent that the lack of a "project manager" in the past has led to lots of underlying communication issues, unorganized processes, and a little bit of passive politics. At first, it was very hard for me to get stuff done when it came to communicating with the team and Dr. Rafael because of two reasons: One, the trip wasn't a priority for many of the people, and two, I didn't have any credibility within Baylor to have my questions, emails, or requests answered.

Everyone going on the trip was already so busy with their day-to-day activities that when it came to the tasks surrounding Salvando Corazones, no one was willing to put in the time for it. This lapse in responses, paired with some communication issues between Ellie, Dr. Rafael, and me, made for a rough first few weeks where it felt like there was no progress with the planning.

After a pivotal in-person meeting where Dr. Rafael, Leslie (his secretary), Ellie, and I talked through some of the difficulties we were facing and outlined some clear action items, I felt that there was finally a clear pathway that I could follow along with some concrete tasks I could check off as I accomplished them instead of just hoping for success. Soon after this meeting, I launched the T-shirt fundraiser, expanded the Facebook page, drafted some "Save the Date" invitations for the February fundraiser, and got in contact with everyone going on the trip regarding updates and decisions.

Hopefully, going forward with this project, I can continue to get concrete action items to deliver on later so that my progress isn't overshadowed by uncertainty with regard to what I am supposed to be doing and when.