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CBL Abstract  
Cape Town Study Abroad

St. Joseph’s Home: a unique healthcare facility  
in post-apartheid South Africa

Despite the abolition of apartheid in 1994, the effects of the era can still be seen in modern South Africa’s dysfunctional health system, generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic, and high unemployment rate. While there have been great strides towards improving equity throughout the country, economic disparities remain between races. This is reflected in the higher mortality rate among the black population, particularly those living in informal settlements where there is a lack of adequate sanitation, clean water, and safe housing. Children, particularly those who are ill, from these areas fare poorly due to their living situation; oftentimes, their parents are either too busy working to take proper care of them or are addicted to drugs. In order to address this issue, St. Joseph’s Home, located outside of Cape Town, provides free medical and rehabilitative care for chronically ill children whose living situation does not allow them to be cared for at home. The Home, which was founded in 1935 by Pallotine Sisters, is an all-inclusive non-profit organization; it not only offers twenty-four hour general and specialized nursing care, but also occupational and physiotherapy, a special needs school, a nursing school, a daycare, and social work services. Referred from local hospitals, the children suffer from a number of chronic illnesses, such as HIV/TB, diabetes, and cancer. An important component of the organization is social work; children are discharged with the social worker’s evaluation of their living situation. Social workers also follow up with discharged patients to ensure that the children are being properly taken care of at home; if not, the children are readmitted back to St. Joseph’s. In order to remain a cost-effective and sustainable organization, one of the Home’s challenges, a Time Motion study was conducted in order to evaluate the efficacy of the nursing care.