Vietnam’s healthcare system was one of the subjects explored by students of WCM-Q who were accepted onto a new service learning trip.

The six pre-medical students visited Ho Chi Minh City to spend time at a rehabilitation and orthopedic hospital. Accompanied by WCM-Q faculty members, the trainee doctors were able to interact with patients and staff and observe surgical procedures. They met US medical students and – the highlight of the trip – spent time at a special needs center for children with neurological disorders.

The experience was organized by WCM-Q’s Institute of Population Health and the college’s Division of Pre-Medical Education with the aim of providing a global service learning trip that allows students to develop intercultural sensitivities and experience foreign healthcare systems in countries with different economies.

Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, senior associate dean for population health, capacity building and student affairs, said international awareness was vital for the modern physician.

He said: “One of the things that WCM-Q does is provide educational, clinical and community experiences to the students that are not available to them as part of the traditional curriculum. To us in pre-medical education, medical education and the Institute of Public Health, we feel that is important because with the changing focus of healthcare there is a dependence on global collaboration and partnerships, so any such overseas experience becomes valuable.”

Dr. Mamtani added that the service learning trip also made the students appreciate the healthcare system in Qatar, which as a country with a high GDP, provides a free and comprehensive healthcare service. In Vietnam, patients must pay 30 per cent of their treatment cost. Some also have their family staying with them in hospital to help look after them.

The trip also encouraged the trainee physicians to take a practical role in certain parts of healthcare, and strengthened their commitment to medicine.

Nada Al Mulla was one of the pre-medical students who visited Vietnam.

She said: “During the experience, I shadowed doctors and spent time with the nurses. I was able to observe orthopedic surgeries, acupuncture, mixing medicines, wound cleaning, plasma technology, physiotherapy, and electric therapy. I also realized how privileged we are in Qatar to have access to quality healthcare at a minimal cost since whereas this was not the case in Vietnam. Furthermore, I saw firsthand how health is influenced by culture and traditions and the environment we live in.

“What I gained from this trip cannot be taught in a classroom and I feel the impact of this trip on my future career is limitless.”

Fatin Ishtiaq was also on the trip.

He said: “The experience gave me an insight into my future life as a doctor. It gave me a great motivational boost to go through my journey of medicine despite the hardships. I intend to use this experience to remind myself as to why I joined this vocation in the first place.”