This August, I traveled to Argentina to research the history of tuberculosis control in Buenos Aires. From the perspective of a medical and urban historian, tuberculosis (TB) is a fascinating disease. Although TB is contagious, often the most effective method of treatments for turn-of-the-century physicians was not fighting the bacillus itself, but rather improving the socioeconomic and structural conditions that weakened and predisposed patients in the first place. In early twentieth century Buenos Aires, a city undergoing rapid industrialization and population growth, this connection between poverty and disease stood out particularly clearly. For my history Honors Project under the direction of Allen Wells, I plan to explore the role of Argentine doctors in combatting tuberculosis in Buenos Aires. While many doctors turned to laboratory work to create a vaccine or focused on treatment of individual patients, many also viewed themselves as higienistas, social reformers battling against the uncleanliness and unhealthiness of industrial urban life.

To this end, I spent my time in Argentina in archives, looking for primary documents that would illuminate this issue. In particular, I conducted much of my research at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) Medical School library. There, I found theses of medical students dating back to the late nineteenth century, records of medical conferences on contagious disease and public health, annual reports of the National Department of Hygiene, and scientific journals, such as *Los Anales de Biotipologia, Eugenesia, y Medicina Social; La Semana Médica; Los Anales de la Cátedra de Patología y Clínica de la Tuberculosis; El Boletín de la Liga Contra la Tuberculosis;* and *Revista Médica Argentina.* I also met with Marita Formosa of the UBA museum of pathology, who helped explain the role Argentine doctors played in exploring the disease’s common and uncommon clinical forms. Finally, I visited the archives of the Biblioteca Nacional to examine working class periodicals for references to tuberculosis and the role of doctors in its treatment and prevention.

Over the course of my Honors Project with Allen Wells this fall, I plan to delve into the photographs and photocopies of the texts I brought back. In addition, I am planning to travel to the Library of Congress to look in several turn-of-the-century Argentine daily newspapers for views of non-medical professionals on anti-tuberculosis efforts. From my efforts, I hope to develop a clearer image of a unique medical battle, one that, in the words of one Argentine doctor was not “a direct fight against the germ itself… but rather indirectly combatting poverty, ignorance, and bad sanitary conditions.”

Faculty Mentor: Allen Wells

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