*Fall 2013*

# THE GLOBAL CONNECTION

**NSU-COM International Medical Outreach Newsletter**

## From the Director…

There has been a decline in the number of physician-scientists in medical practice. Medical students' learning of research methodology has been shown to be related to a positive attitude toward science. Research also shows that medical students who have higher involvement in scientific activities feel more secure about their own scientific competencies. However, given the demands and competing interests of formulating a preclinical medical curriculum, as well as the results of attitudes of learners during medical training, providing students with research training is challenging. To overcome this challenge, we developed an innovative pilot program that includes a research project for our preclinical students who participate in our outreach programs that provide medical care to underserved communities in Vietnam, Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador.

Evidence suggests that interest of the subject and the relevance are frequent motivating factors for medical students to conduct research. Therefore, we chose to conduct a survey to classify musculoskeletal complaints among patients in underserved rural communities. For three consecutive years, prior to leaving, I taught participating students research methods during students' off-time (e.g., lunch, after class), such as protocol development, instrument design, and data collection. Students also completed the CITI course for ethical considerations when working with human subjects. Some students served as co-investigators and others as research assistants, depending on their level of involvement in the study. Upon return, students learned about database management, data entry, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. As a result, students coauthored posters to report the findings and showcase NSU-COM's international program achievements. All were accepted for presentation at the AOA Research Conference in three consecutive years (2011-2013).

These combined experiences may help foster a positive, inquisitive attitude toward science and a sense of security of personal scientific competencies in students. This innovative approach to learning about research in a nontraditional way gives students hands-on practical experience in conducting research. Students participating in a flexible program tailored to their needs and interests may emerge with a stronger foundation and predilection for scientific research. With the medical field gravitating more toward an evidence-based approach to patient care, participating students may be better quipped and thus provide better patient outcomes. In order to encourage and sustain medical students' enthusiasm and interest in research, it may be important to provide a variety of learning experiences and quality research opportunities during medical school.

***-- Robin J. Jacobs, Ph.D., M.S.W.***
***Associate Professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine***
***Director, International Medicine***

## Who We Are

The International Medical Outreach Committee comprises NSU-COM professors, clinical faculty members, and students who share a passion for global health. Our international programs promote quality care for patients in need worldwide and provide our students with unique training and insight on the practice of medicine from a global perspective.

## About Our Programs

Through collaboration with international universities and health organizations, we offer our students a variety of cultural clinical learning experiences, which include one- or two-week medical service trips as well as longer rotations and internships in more than 50 countries. While our students benefit from learning through service, we fulfill our goal of delivering quality health care in underserved communities around the world.

# International Student Exchanges

Two medical students from the **Medical University of Graz (MUG), Austria** are completing a one-month clinical rotation at NSU-COM in internal medicine and family medicine in the Ziff Clinic. This is our second year accepting students from MUG after developing a collaborative relationship with the faculty members and administrators of their international programs office.

In addition, two medical students from **Comenius University, Slovakia**, a nation which is a member of the European Union, are completing a one-month clinical at NSU-COM in different departments, particularly OMM and OB/GYN. We are trying to develop an affiliation with an already comprehensive relationship established with Comenius University Faculty of Medicine. We are also anticipating the arrival of exchange students from our collaborating universities in Argentina and China in 2014.

All students live in student housing during their stay and can enjoy all the amenities of student life, such as our extensive medical e-library system. Like all NSU medical students working with patients, they receive the required training to work with patients, such as HIPAA and OSHA training. We hope the experiences of these and all our exchange students will enrich their medical education and encourage them to share what they learn about osteopathic medicine and NSU with their colleagues and faculty members at home.

## Examples of Countries Where COM Students Rotate

Argentina
Brazil
Canada
China
Costa Rica
Ecuador
Germany
Ghana
Guatemala
Haiti
India
Israel
Jamaica
Jordan
Kenya
Mexico
Nepal
Pakistan
Peru
South Africa
Taiwan
Vietnam

# Benefits of Student Exchange

**Educational**

- International learning and knowledge propels students toward acceptance and understanding of an array of different cultural and community perspectives.
- Awareness and adoption of alternative, multifaceted approaches to learning.
- Enhanced interest in global issues as well as a broader general knowledge.

**Personal**

- Self-development and awareness leading to enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Maturity and social poise, fuelled by the necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support network and comfort zone.

**Long-Term**

- Increased pressure to communicate and relate to others develops an awareness of group dynamics and personal sensitivity toward others.
- Successful program completion represents an excellent measure of personal flexibility, encompassing an ability to reach compromise, focus, and succeed through challenging times.

# Student Review: Outreach Trip

## ECUADOR 2013

**By OMS-I Sofia A. Funes, OMS-I Romana Popara, and OMS-I Alexander Gonzalez-Jacobo**

An opportunity for first-year medical students to travel abroad and get hands-on experience in the field is truly invaluable. No matter what the additional interests were, whether the opportunity to practice Spanish, see a new continent, or experience a new culture, the united purpose of wanting to help people who do not often get medical care inspired our group of 25 students to leave our regular, lecture-led lives and immerse ourselves in an entirely different world. In March 2013, a group of OSM-I students and 10 volunteers/preceptors traveled to Ecuador to conduct a medical outreach program to medically underserved communities.

In both the family and internal medicine section, and more with each subsequent day, students were expected to do some aspects of physical exams, and were expected to ask more detailed and relevant questions, specifically discussing with the preceptors what the right course of action was and why. While each patient received personalized care, we were put in the role of what a medical professional does every day. There was never a moment to get truly comfortable; the limits of what were expected of us always grew and the locations quickly changed. We recalled the moment when our first patient came in and we realized we were expected, with our own hands, to examine an actual patient—something that had only been theory moments before.

From talking to people, translators, and each other, the experience in Ecuador was positive not only for all of us who visited but also for the people that expected a good level of care. They were able to address questions, heal acute pain, and get instructions for care of chronic pain. Just as importantly, these people who placed so much trust in us also helped us in innumerable ways. We were able to see the end game to all of our studying. We were inspired to keep going, keep trekking through whatever the next couple of years brings, be it boards or downpours of rain during a night hike. The preceptors were so enthusiastic about teaching us, and I learned more about medicine in those nine days than I have in the past year of medical school.

## Student IMOC Executive Board 2013-14

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## Service Learning on a Global Level

NSU-COM currently runs several outreach trips per year in which we bring teams of volunteer physicians, students, and other medical personnel to developing countries, where we provide health services that include primary care, dentistry, OMM, and minor surgeries. Our visits foster long-lasting partnerships and provide medical students with unparalleled clinical experience in rural, resource-poor settings.

THE GLOBAL CONNECTION

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# UPCOMING MEDICAL OUTREACH TRIPS

## Winter 2013 Schedule

***Web site: http://medicine.nova.edu/aboutus/medical_outreach.html***

### Vietnam

**Dates:** December 6-22, 2013

Our Vietnam medical outreach team will have its second annual service trip to Ben Tre Province, Vietnam. Our participating volunteer physicians and students will take off for Ho Chi Minh City, where they will be received by our partnering organization, The Degenhardt Foundation/Aid for Kids. This international NGO has been operating in underserved regions of Vietnam for the past 20 years to establish health centers and other community development projects. The NSU-COM medical team will spend two weeks rotating through several outreach sites in the Ben Tre Province to provide these rural communities with an opportunity to receive greatly needed medical services. The majority of patients we'll be serving work long hours tending rice paddies or doing subsistence farming. Due to their remote location, many children do not attend school and have rarely, if ever, seen a doctor. In between clinic days, our team will participate in public health projects, and of course tour the countryside to experience the people, lush tropical scenery, and cultural attractions.

### Peru

**Dates**: December 6-15, 2013

Our Peru medical outreach team will embark on its fourth annual service trip to Piura, a province in the northwestern region of the country where NSU-COM has established a longstanding relationship with the international charitable organization America Developing Smiles (ADS). Physicians and students will volunteer for a week at a small clinic that serves the displaced Andes immigrants who inhabit the shantytowns surrounding the city. Most of these families live without electricity or running water, and the clinic struggles to meet the medical needs of this expanding population through local donations and help from visiting volunteer health care providers such as the NSU team. There is an option to visit the ancient city Machu Picchu after the outreach trip has ended.

### Jamaica

December 2013 (Dates TBA)

The Jamaica Medical Outreach Trip, now in its 11th year, is led by Dr. Paula Anderson-Worts and allows for multiple programs in the NSU Health Professions Division to come together for the single purpose of providing needed care to the poor and underserved of Kingston.

# CALLING ALL PRECEPTORS!

# Vietnam and Peru 2013

Our international medical outreach trips are made possible by the physicians and other health care providers who volunteer their time and clinical skills to mentor medical students while helping patients in need. If you're looking for an opportunity to combine exotic travel with humanitarianism, please join us.

***To volunteer, please contact Dr. Jacobs at rjacobs@nova.edu.***

## How Can YOU Make a Difference?

### Donate Your Time and Skills

Aside from healing patients with your own hands, one of the greatest services you as a health professional can provide is imparting your clinical expertise to the next generation through hands-on training.

The success of our international programs relies on community physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others who volunteer their time and professional services for the benefit of our students and patients. In an effort to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate in these service trips, we are constantly seeking new clinical preceptors to join the medical outreach teams for each country.

### Sponsor a Medical Student for International Outreach

With rising costs of international travel, most young medical students who are passionate enough to help needy patients in developing countries are struggling themselves with educational expenses and hefty loans. Contributions can be dedicated toward scholarships that will allow students to partake in a life-changing experience that will not only impact their medical careers but also make them more compassionate physicians. The International Medical Outreach Committee is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit under NSU-COM. All donations are tax deductible. Medical/dental supplies and children's toys/clothing are also appreciated.

***For a complete list of trips scheduled for the 2013-14 academic year, and to find out more about making a donation or volunteering as a preceptor or translator, please contact Dr. Robin Jacobs at rjacobs@nova.edu or visit http://medicine.nova.edu/aboutus/medical_outreach.html.***

# Medical Outreach Photo Gallery

Thanks to our NSU faculty members and community volunteers who dedicated their time and expertise to make our programs a reality.

**NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**
Nova Southeastern University admits students of any race, color, sex, age, nondisqualifying disability, religion or creed, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school, and does not discriminate in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

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**For information about our international medical outreach programs, please visit our Web site at *http://medicine.nova.edu/aboutus/medical_outreach.html.***