

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY MEDICAL PRACTICUM REPORT

January 2025

The 39th Medical Practicum returned to the Baja Verapaz region of Guatemala for the fifth consecutive time to work with underserved rural Maya communities. Based in the rural village of Vista Hermosa for the third year in a row, this short-term experience in global health collaborated with our local partner Fundación para el Desarrollo del Norte AQ'AB'AL (FUNDENOR). FUNDENOR facilitated essential connections with the Ministry of Social Assistance and Public Health (MASPAS) healthcare providers and the Community Councils of Urban and Rural Development of Guatemala (COCODES), representing the 42 communities surrounding Vista Hermosa.

Our group from the United States included sixteen undergraduate students, one fourth-year medical student, one resident, five physicians, one physician assistant, one certified nurse midwife, two pharmacists, two dentists, and one laboratory technician. Guatemalan group members included three dentists, six FUNDENOR development workers, two MASPAS nurses, three MASPAS auxiliary nurses, and 14 interpreters (English-Spanish and Spanish-Mayan languages). The Q'eqchi' and Poqomchi' Maya rural communities with whom we worked welcomed us warmly.

While numbers cannot fully capture the medical practicum impact, we did 1,559 medical consultations, 454 tooth extractions, 323 lab tests on-site, and 2,839 prescriptions. Lab tests included glucose, HbA1c, hemoglobin, urinalysis, pregnancy, and SARS-CoV-2. MASPAS nurses, who worked alongside our team throughout the practicum, processed Pap tests and coordinated a referral system for further care.

Support from twenty-seven U.S. individuals, businesses, and organizations, along with Medical Practicum Endowment earnings, provided the \$28,556 used for medicines and medical/dental items obtained at substantially reduced costs. Unused supplies remained with FUNDENOR to help support other health clinics in its work with the COCODES.

While the heaviest rains stopped before we arrived, the muddy roads were probably the worst we had experienced in that region. In this challenging environment, FUNDENOR's use of meetings, Mayan radio broadcasts, and WhatsApp groups to publicize our clinic days proved especially effective, as clinic attendance increased year over year. On a weekend day off, the team was invited to a local *Cristo Negro* celebration with dancing, food, and community, which was widely shared over local social media.

Collaboration with FUNDENOR, diligent efforts, and favorable circumstances led to a relatively smooth trip. To date, 38 former medical practicum students have returned as providers on the trip, a testament to the program's lasting impact.

In summary, the 2025 Medical Practicum in Vista Hermosa, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala provided service and experiential learning that were faithful to Manchester's tradition and, we believe, well worth the effort.

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