



Bearing witness to the Medical Practicum

There he was again, all 83 years of him, months after back surgery sitting on a backless plank in an outboard motor-powered canoe on a Nicaraguan river. Professor Emeritus Ed Miller had one more Medical Practicum under his belt, 37 years after he founded Manchester's January health clinic in Central America.

This year, for the first time, I had the privilege of seeing it for myself.

As many of you know, the Practicum has become a January tradition at MU and a rite of passage for many students planning health care careers. Jeff Osborne, associate professor of chemistry, leads it now, and takes with him not only students, but health care practitioners, and medicines and medical supplies that Jeff purchases with donations from people like you.

Typically, there is a waiting list for students to go. When they do, they work and learn alongside the practitioners, providing health care and dental services for residents of remote Nicaraguan villages, and veterinary services for animals. The students get not only clinical experience but also a deep appreciation of the people and communities with whom they connect. Often, they leave the villages with a clearer vision of their own careers and lives.

Many of the practitioners on the Practicum are alumni who first made the trip as Manchester students. Now health care professionals with careers of their own, they often use vacation time from their jobs. But they approach the Practicum not as a sacrifice but as something that fills them deep in their souls and many return, again and again.

No one has returned more than Ed, a 1956 graduate and longtime chemistry professor who started the Practicum in 1981. Our students this year were in awe of Ed for having started the program – they treated him like a rock star – and deeply grateful that he made the trip to be with them.

A challenging trip it is. I spent two days getting to the small riverside village of Amak – much of it on rutted clay roads and many miles on the Rio Bocay – and one grueling 15-hour day getting back to Managua. In between, I spent two and half days with the Manchester group, taking patient temperatures as part of the

student-staffed intake team. Though my time in Amak was short, my most important contribution will be bearing witness to others what I have now seen firsthand: the remarkable story of Manchester's Medical Practicum and the equally remarkable people who have made it possible.

They make me proud and I hope they make you proud too.

If you would like to read more about the Practicum and the difference it makes, I encourage you to visit the website, www.medicalpracitcum.org. If you'd like to make a donation, you may do so there or on the [giving page](#) of the University website. Thank you!

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave McFadden". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave McFadden
President