

MANCHESTER COLLEGE MEDICAL PRACTICUM REPORT
January 2009

During the 26th annual Medical Practicum in Central America, which was the 16th to Nicaragua and the 2nd to Ciudad Antigua, the medical team performed 1,535 consultations (1,420 medical and 115 dental) and pulled 362 teeth in Ciudad Antigua and the surrounding 10 communities. We are extremely grateful to those who contributed to the success of this program.

Medicines and supplies were purchased at reduced costs or received as a donation from Interchurch Medical Assistance, Inc., Blessings International, MAP International, World Dental Relief, Fisher Scientific, and Accion Medica Cristiana. The medicines and supplies for this year's trip cost \$11,427, with a market value well over \$100,000. The medicines and supplies not purchased in Nicaragua were hand carried in 22 large, checked bags on our flight and everything was cleared through customs within 24 hours. All medicines not used during our two weeks of clinics were given to the Ciudad Antigua Clinic. Compared to the previous year, we noticed a distinct improvement over the healthcare situation of the Ciudad Antigua district healthcare, including about 6,000 people. The medicines and medical assistance we provided have been a contributing factor to this change.

Our team consisted of five physicians, one physician assistant, one dentist, one pharmacist, one physical therapist, fourteen Manchester college students, one family member and one faculty. Each day we had two physicians help staff the local clinic in Ciudad Antigua and sent the remaining physicians in vehicles to set up clinics in the outlying communities. The mobile team comprised four doctors, 12 students, four translators, a Nicaraguan doctor and Nicaraguan nurses. Journeys to the outlying communities varied in length from 30 minutes to 2 hours over dirt roads passable due to the dry season.

The medical professionals diagnosed 61 different conditions, with the most common being gastritis, gripe (cold), parasites, headache, and muscle/joint pains. The medical professionals in the group were once again tremendous resources for the students, patiently teaching, explaining and modeling. Some unforgettable cases involved childbirth, bacterial meningitis, infant dehydration, and severe tooth decay.

Students initially tend to think that they are simply going to help people and learn the mechanics of health care. Perhaps more important in the long term, though, are the new perspectives and international awakening that the students, and others on the trip, can experience while serving the poor in this way. Lilla Watson, an Australian Aboriginal educator and activist, once said: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." A large, overarching goal of this experience is for students to develop a sense of common humanity with those they encounter. This cross-cultural, international experience can help give the lives of the students more meaningful direction. The Ciudad Antigua residents and Medical Practicum participants have much about which to be thankful after our January 2009 Medical Practicum.

Jeffrey P. Osborne
Medical Practicum Director
Manchester College