

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY MEDICAL PRACTICUM REPORT  
January 2014

The 30th Medical Practicum to Central America was the 20th to Nicaragua and the fourth to the remote villages of the Alto Wangki-Bocay, accessible only by dugout canoe. We held health clinics for eight days in the communities of San Andrés, Amak, and Somotignes, which are of Miskito, Mayangna, and mestizo ethnicities, respectively. Contributions from many people and organizations made this work possible.

All medicines and medical supplies were either given directly to the group or purchased using \$12,606 provided for this purpose by 30 donors. Most of the medicines and medical supplies were procured in Nicaragua through Acción Médica Cristiana, a Nicaraguan non-governmental organization that establishes nonprofit pharmacies in underserved areas. Patterson Dental of Spokane, Wash., and Manchester Family Dentistry of North Manchester, Ind., donated most of the dental items. Remaining items were bought at discounts from Blessings International and World Dental. The significant quantity of medicines and supplies not prescribed during our clinics were contributed to the local health care system.

We performed 1,128 medical consultations, saw 126 dental patients, and extracted 314 teeth, focusing on acute care. We also employed, for the second time, a single-visit approach for detection and treatment of cervical pre-cancers, which involved visual inspection with acetic acid and CO<sub>2</sub> tank cryotherapy. Further, we screened for diabetes, *H. pylori* infection, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. All medical work was done in coordination with the nationwide system of small clinics, called Sistema Local de Atención Integral en Salud (SILAIS). Notably, this trip was the second that included a veterinarian who dewormed 39 cattle, 205 dogs and 297 pigs. We believe the outcomes of our effort were worthwhile.

Our group from the United States counted 16 students, four physicians, a physician assistant, a nurse practitioner-midwife, a dentist, a dental assistant, a pharmacist, two nurses, one veterinarian, a support person, and a faculty. In Nicaragua, we were fortunate to be joined by seven English-Spanish translators, two assistant, one physician, one community health worker, one nurse, two watchmen, and 10 boat drivers. This group of 54 people traveled 215 miles round trip in five motorized dugout canoes to access the communities along rain-swollen rivers. Eating food prepared by village women and living for the most part without electricity or running water, as the villagers do, helped us empathize with their situation. Our relationships grew with both the Nicaraguans in our group and the villagers.

The Manchester University Medical Practicum strives to educate undergraduate students through working with U.S. health care providers to provide care in an international, less-developed setting. Most students were attracted to the trip by the opportunity to work alongside U.S. health care providers. Other powerful learning occurred, too, as students were exposed to poverty, health care inequality, cultural differences, insufficient language skills, and challenging living conditions. More than just providing health care, we developed relationships and saw life as others see it. Many people have reason to be thankful for the 2014 Medical Practicum.

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