

# Notes From Abroad

Yale/Johnson & Johnson International Health

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## *New Site Opens in Tela, Honduras*

The Yale/Johnson and Johnson International Health Scholars program is joining the University of California San Diego in offering an exciting new rotation in Tela, Honduras. The program was started as the UCSD-Honduras Medical Education Partnership in 1997 by medical students from UCSD. The foundation of the program was cemented by Dr. Sandra Daley from UCSD and Dr Napoleon Gunera, a general surgeon from Tela.

Tela, situated on the picturesque Caribbean coast, was built by the United Fruit Company in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The town itself is home to about 35,000 people with 65,000 people living in the surrounding communities. Both Mestizo and Garifuna cultures are represented in the area. The Garifuna - originally African slaves and indigenous islanders – came to the Caribbean coast of Central America from the island of St Vincents in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, many of the Garifuna live in small villages surrounding Tela.



Garifuna Clinic

The medical system in Honduras finds itself at a crossroads. With economic globalization, manufacturing jobs have multiplied and there is a steadily growing middle class. As in many rapidly developing nations, the relative contribution of chronic diseases to morbidity and mortality is increasingly significant, yet treatment and prevention techniques for diseases such as diabetes and coronary heart disease remain underdeveloped. At the same time, poorer communities continue to struggle with infectious diseases such as malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, and HIV.

Improvements in medical technology and infrastructure are just starting to take root in smaller communities like Tela. For instance, with support from Spain, a modern, spacious new hospital has been built in Tela. It includes an X-ray machine, ultrasound, fluoroscopy, and a laparoscopy suite. However, there are essentially no doctors familiar with the use of these machines. The medical administration in Tela is excited to get some assistance as they approach this transition.

There are opportunities for some interesting outpatient experiences in Tela as well. Visiting practitioners can learn more about the Garifuna culture and about some of the struggles in practicing medicine in a very poor, rural community with almost no resources.



Triunfo Clinic – Tela, Honduras

The health center in the Garifuna village of Triunfo de la Cruz has few medicines and little to offer in the way of intervention. However, visiting physicians will be able to learn a great deal about particular health challenges there, such as HIV and dengue, by accompanying the local health promoter on home visits. Over time, visiting physicians may be able to develop enough of an understanding about the public health needs in a poor community to target some interventions (i.e. – larvicides, mosquito netting, or HIV education). Another clinic, the health center in the mestizo village of Arizona, is better developed and serves more people. The physician, Dr Prieto, who staffs the clinic, is knowledgeable and engaged in the community. They are unable to keep up with the numbers of patients that walk through the doors.

There will be ample opportunity in Tela also for medical education. Many of the practitioners have been trained in general medicine (equivalent of one year of residency). There are few internists. Many of the Honduran physicians expressed interest in receiving lectures

from our visiting residents and career physicians.

Though physicians visiting from the United States will often find themselves in a teaching role, the educational experience for the visiting physician will be invaluable. Physicians may find themselves attempting to treat familiar diseases such as diabetes in unfamiliar ways because of the relative lack of resources. There will be ample time to triage and treat patients in the urgent care/emergency room settings. Physicians will see a large number and variety of patients: chronic diseases, abscesses, malaria, dengue, trauma, minor surgery, TB, HIV. Residents will also be able to take call in the hospital along with one of the general medicine physicians. They may find themselves caring for illnesses for which they would normally call a consult in the United States.

The site in Tela offers ample opportunity to strengthen Spanish skills. Though a few of the physicians speak some English, the majority do not. A home stay opportunity with a Honduran family has also been developed, and is encouraged. Intensive instruction in Spanish will also be available.

Finally, perhaps the greatest treasures one will find in Tela are the people. They are universally gracious and warm, and are proud of their country and culture and are extremely excited about receiving visitors. They also readily acknowledge their need for some additional support from visiting physicians and are ready to welcome them with open arms.

## ***Lahore, Pakistan Offers Rich Clinical Experience***

By Kamran Muhammad, M.D.

I recently spent an exciting six weeks as a Yale/Johnson & Johnson International Health Scholar at Kot Khawaja Saeed Government Hospital located in Lahore, Pakistan. Although Lahore is the second largest city in Pakistan, the hospital I worked at was on the outskirts of the city serving a very poor indigent population with little access to healthcare.



Kamran, Dr. Sohail Ahmed  
and Dr. Abdul Sattar

The facilities were limited to basic radiology and laboratory services and clinical judgment was heavily relied on in caring for patients. My experience was primarily outpatient and I had the opportunity to see many interesting cases including advanced tuberculosis and malaria, as well as diseases more

commonly encountered in the U.S. such as diabetes mellitus and coronary artery disease.

The patients I encountered were very grateful for the medical care they received. The physicians I worked with were excellent clinicians and enthusiastic about my elective. In addition to my medical experiences, I had the opportunity to visit much of the historic city of Lahore and enjoy the delicious local cuisine. My experience in Lahore has enriched my professional and personal life and I look forward to using what I have learned throughout my medical career.



Badshahi Mosque