International Healthcare Missions: Guatemala

Dr. Doreen Pon and Dr. James Scott have traveled to Guatemala and Tanzania to provide healthcare to hundreds of poor, malnourished and sick patients. They follow in the footsteps of Dr. Jesse Martinez, Vice Dean, Academic Diversity and Development, who traveled to Sri Lanka in 2005 with a WesternU medical team to aid survivors of the massive tsunami that followed a 9.0 earthquake. Part II Tanzania will appear in the spring edition.

Guatemala

With a population of about 13 million people, Guatemala is the most populous Central American country. It is a multiethnic, multicultural nation with over twenty different languages spoken by the indigenous people who make up over 40% of its population. Poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, and healthcare problems plague the indigenous people who live in the more remote rural highland areas of the country.

For six days in April 2008, our team of 55 health professionals (general, otolaryngology, plastic, urologic, and gynecologic surgeons, anesthesiologists, operating room and recovery area nurses, surgical technicians, internists, pediatricians, nurse practitioners, dentists, dental assistant, pharmacist and pharmacy technician) and 30 helpers set up operating rooms, recovery rooms, medical and dental clinics on the grounds of the Universidad del Valle, located just outside the small (population 9000) highland village of Sololá. We performed 125 surgeries, and treated 377 adult patients, 268 pediatric patients,
and 121 dental patients. In addition, we evaluated 89 more patients during a one-day outreach to the neighboring village of San Jorge.

When will you be coming back? This was the toughest question patients would ask me during my time as a pharmacist volunteer on a medical mission to Sololá, Guatemala. For me, the question expressed the hope, need, and gratitude of the rural community we were serving. But my answer would only reveal my regret for not being able to do more.

HELPS International is a non-profit organization based in Dallas, Texas. The medical program of HELPS International began in 1988, when the first team of plastic surgeons was sent to offer assistance to the indigenous people living in a rural area of Guatemala. Since that time, teams of volunteers from communities all across the United States have made over 100 government-authorized trips to Guatemala and have treated over 200,000 patients.

Healthcare in Guatemala is vastly underfunded. According to the World Health Organization, the expenditures on health for each person in Guatemala are a scant $256, compared to $6096 per person in the United States. As a result, the under five years of age mortality rate in Guatemala is more than five times higher than the rate in the United States and the adult mortality rate is more than double the rate in the United States. HELPS believes that providing excellent surgical, medical, and dental care to the rural areas of Guatemala helps to promote a positive healthcare attitude among the general population and helps to lessen the burden on the medical centers in the cities of Guatemala.

At other times, I worried whether our patients really understood how to take the medications we were giving them. Every day in our makeshift little *farmacia*, we would be confronted by patients who did not speak Spanish and even more who could not read their medication labels. But we soon realized that they were sharp—watching our faces and listening closely to directions, repeating our instructions and traveling with multiple family members who served as interpreters and chaperones. Occasionally the patients tested us to see if we would give them an answer that was more to their liking, different from what the physicians were obviously nagging them about.

Many of our patients had diseases that are also common in the United States, but, because of the lack of medical attention, were suffering from extreme forms of the diseases. One man came to clinic complaining of pain in his hands and an inability to bend the fingers of his right hand. Our internist discovered disfiguring tophaceous gout deposits in his elbows, feet, and hands. In the United States, we would prescribe treatment with a relatively inexpensive oral medication to prevent these gouty deposits from forming in the first place. For this unfortunate patient, however, the best we could do was to offer anti-inflammatory medications for the pain and the name of the medication to prevent further deposits from forming.

Like many other practitioners, I felt handicapped by the limited resources I had available to me. We knew the names of medications that could help some of our patients, but oftentimes did not have a supply of the medications to give. When we did have the medications, we generally could supply only a limited amount, and hope that the patients would be able to afford to buy more medications once their supplies ran out. As we began to see more patients than anticipated, we economized by cutting pain pills in half, or telling patients to take their vitamins only every other day in order to make them last longer. Of course, we did have our successes too. One day, a pregnant woman came to us complaining of severe headaches and was found to have very elevated blood pressure. We were able to supply her with an antihypertensive medication that would be safe for her to take during her entire pregnancy.

I can only wonder how many lives are lost and how many people are disabled by potentially treatable medical conditions. How fortunate we were that our gynecologists could detect and remove a (hopefully) benign 14-pound ovarian cyst from a young woman before it burst and possibly took her life. But how many more people die unnecessarily because of a lack of medical attention?

HELPS International, through the work of its volunteers who donate their time, money and expertise, and with the assistance of charitable organizations that donate equipment, medications and supplies, has been able to make a small but significant impact on the health of rural Guatemalans. Everyone deserves the chance to lead a healthy life, but few people have the resources to do so. But if everyone gives up just a little bit of themselves to help someone out, they will enrich not only the lives of their beneficiaries, but their own lives as well.

Doreen Pon, PharmD
Assistant Professor, Pharmacy Practice and Administration
Student Accomplishments

CAPSLEAD 2008

Each of the seven schools of pharmacy sent 10 students to the 6th Annual California Student Leadership (CAPSLEAD) Conference in Sacramento for training to be future pharmacy leaders. After the conference, the students completed a project and presented it as a poster at several state and national pharmacy meetings. Their project was entitled: “Awareness and Accessibility of Emergency Contraception.”

Danielle Dishmon, PharmD Candidate ’10 and Lisa Kalajian, PharmD Candidate ’10 present the CAPSLEAD poster at the 2008 ASHP Mid-Year in Orlando, Florida.

WesternU CSHP Student Poster at ASHP Mid-Year

The WesternU CSHP/ASHP Student Chapter presented a Student Showcase poster at the ASHP Mid-Year Meeting in Orlando in December, 2008.

Pictured Above: Tuong-Vi Nguyen, PharmD Candidate ’09, Christine Joh, PharmD Candidate ’10, Dr. Sam Shimomura, Linda Park, PharmD Candidate ’09, Mehdi Amiri, PharmD Candidate ’11

MCPP Students Graduate

The College of Pharmacy graduated its fifth Mid-Career Post Baccalaureate PharmD (MCPP) class in December 2008. This program allows American and primarily foreign pharmacists with a BS degree in pharmacy to obtain their PharmD in a condensed time frame.

Clinical Skills Competition

Congratulations to the team of Maximillian Jahng, PharmD Candidate ’09 and Stacy Yang, PharmD Candidate ’09 for winning the WesternU Clinical Skills Competition on September 15, 2008. They represented WesternU at the CSHP Seminar ’08 at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim in October and then at the ASHP Mid-Year Clinical meeting in Orlando in December.

Front: Dr. Eric Gupta, Crystal Lui, PharmD Candidate ’11, Lisa Kalajian, PharmD Candidate ’10, Jessica Love, PharmD Candidate ’11, Terrence McKenna, PharmD Candidate ’10, Dennis Do, PharmD Candidate ’10, Danielle Dishmon, PharmD Candidate ’10, Sophia Liou, PharmD Candidate ’10 and Frances Aguilar, PharmD Candidate ’10. Back: Richard Vuu, PharmD Candidate ’11, Matt Rim, PharmD Candidate ’11, Dr. Sam Shimomura

Front Row: Eun Sun Lee, PharmD ’08, Jing Zhao, PharmD ’08, Nirav Patel, PharmD ’08, Priyanka Kothia, PharmD ’08, Yakinkumar Patel, PharmD ’08, Yu Ping Chu, PharmD ’08, Back Row: Dean Daniel Robinson, Ji Hye Kim, PharmD ’08, Long-Shang Chang, PharmD ’08, Hsin Chieh Lee, PharmD ’08, Umang Shah, PharmD ’08, Nirav Rathod, PharmD ’08, Assistant Dean Sunil Prabhu. Not pictured from the MCPP Class of 2008: Deepa Annavaram, PharmD ’08, Su-Fen Chen, PharmD ’08, Young Ran Ha, PharmD ’08, Chieko Hein, PharmD ’08, Jigna Kumbhani, PharmD ’08, Haitao Li, PharmD ’08, Haritha Miriyala, PharmD ’08, Blessy Simon, PharmD ’08, Eglis Tellez-Corrales, PharmD ’08 and Nishant Thakkar, PharmD ’08
The WesternU College of Pharmacy is part of a statewide research initiative, Partners in D, involving seven schools of pharmacy in California, lead by UCSF. The group received a $3.7 million dollar grant from the Amgen Foundation to train pharmacy students and other healthcare professional students how to help underserved seniors select the best Medicare Part D plan by using the Plan Finder tool on the Medicare website. This fall, all of our 120 first year pharmacy students were trained in Medicare Part D and the Plan Finder tool and participated in nine outreach programs in the surrounding communities. They helped approximately 140 seniors save from $100 to over $3,000 dollars a year by switching them to a better plan. The WesternU faculty involved with this project are Sam Shimomura, Roger Klotz, Micah Hata, and Anadi Law along with Community Pharmacy Resident Chi-Wei Dai.
Marina Lukovsky, PharmD ’01, completed a residency and then joined the pharmacy staff at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. She is one of the authors of an article published in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine:


Mark Bounthavong, PharmD ’04

Dr. Bounthavong was one of the authors of a poster that received the ASHP Best Practice Award at the ASHP Mid-Year Meeting in Orlando, Florida on December 7, 2008. The poster was entitled: “Implementing a Comprehensive Emergency Department Pharmacist Program” the co-authors from the VA San Diego Healthcare System are Victoria Aldridge, Helen Park and Anthony Morreale.

Recent Grads Join Amgen

Hitao Li, PharmD ’08 recently completed the Mid-Career PharmD program and has been hired as a Medical Communications Manager at Amgen. He had worked at Amgen prior to enrolling at WesternU.

Kristina Reyes, PharmD ’08, says she has found her “dream job here at Amgen” working as a Medical Information Analyst, Oncology at Amgen. She says “I work from home 3 days per week and commute to Thousand Oaks 2 days. I absolutely love it!!! I’m in the medical information dept and I do tons of reading studies and writing.”

Partners in D Peer to Peer

The second phase of the Partners in D initiative is for pharmacy students to be trained to teach their peers in other health professions about Medicare Part D. Four WesternU pharmacy students, Michelle Candido, PharmD Candidate ’10, Jamie Ky, PharmD Candidate ’11, Kolistin Tsai, PharmD Candidate ’11, Mehdi Amiri, PharmD Candidate ’11, were trained at UCSF in August and then received follow-up training at USC and WesternU. On January 7, 2009, Drs. Helene Lipton and Cindy Lai from UCSF, along with WesternU faculty Dr. Sam Shimomura, Dr. Micah Hata, Professor Roger Klotz and Community Pharmacy Resident, Dr. Chih-Wei Dai conducted a dress rehearsal practice session at WesternU for the four students.

Dr. Chih-Wei Dai, Michelle Candido, PharmD Candidate ’10, Jamie Ky, PharmD Candidate ’11, Dr. Helene Lipton, Dr. Cindy Lai, Kolistin Tsai, PharmD Candidate ’11, Mehdi Amiri, PharmD Candidate ’11, Dr. Sam Shimomura
New Dean’s Advisory Committee Member

Michael Negrete, PharmD
Dr. Michael Negrete obtained his Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of California, San Francisco. He is currently the Chief Executive at the Pharmacy Foundation of California. Prior to his current position, he was the CEO of the Premier Pharmacists Network and served 6 years as the Vice President of Clinical Affairs for the California Pharmacists Association. He also has experience in managed care at Blue Shield of California.

New Residents and Fellows

Tina Liu, Pharm.D
Tina Liu, PharmD graduated from Loma Linda University in 2007 and attended California State University San Bernardino for her pre-pharmacy requirements. Tina completed a PGY1 General Pharmacy Practice Residency at St. Joseph’s Medical Center in Stockton, CA in 2008 and is now completing a PGY2 Cardiology Residency with Dr. Cynthia Jackevicius at WesternU and the VA West Los Angeles Medical Center.

Amir Zargarzadeh, PharmD
Amir Zargarzadeh, BS, PharmD, has joined WesternU as a Fellow in Outcomes Research, working with Dr. Anandi Law. He did his pre-pharmacy at the University of California, Davis and his pharmacy degrees at the University of Utah and University of Texas, Austin. He has extensive research, teaching and administrative experiences and most recently was at the University of Montreal, Canada, as an invited scientist to do research on medication usage in pregnancy.

Faculty Accomplishments

Grants

Chow S (PI), Campbell A (co PI) Wang J (UCLA medical student co PI); collaborative WesternU and Drew research proposal; “Inflammatory Biomarkers in Left Ventricular Remodeling under Stem Cell and Pharmacological Treatment in a Rat Model of Myocardial Infarction.” $21,500

Min D “Clinical and Genetic risk factors for post-transplant complication in Korean and Hispanic populations” California Korean Pharmacist Association; $20,000

Nguyen M, Wang J (Co PI) “Pharmacokinetics of daptomycin during cardiopulmonary bypass surgery” Cubist Pharmaceuticals; $178,953.00

Prabhu Y Year 2 Renewal “Combined Chemoprevention Using A Nanotechnology-based Therapeutic System,” National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Cancer Institute (NCI) sponsored R03 program, PAR-06-313, Grant ID # 1R03CA121409-01; $55,000

Wang J, Huang Y, have been awarded a grant from Takeda Pharmaceuticals for their research “Studies on the Preventive Effect of Alogliptin on the Development of Diabetes in HFD/STZ Mice and Its Mechanism.” $134,554

Publications

Chung E AACP White Paper on “Essential Components of a Faculty Development Program for Pharmacy Practice Faculty” Phamacotherapy 2008:28(10):245e-268e


Dean Robinson welcomes new Dean’s Advisory Council member Michael Negrete, PharmD.
Think of an endowment as a sturdy redwood tree. These evergreens stand tall for generations, providing shelter and shade in every season. They give endlessly for the benefit of others. You can create an evergreen endowment at WesternU’s College of Pharmacy – a lasting legacy bearing your name will help sustain the University’s financial landscape for generations to come. With your help, future pharmacists will change lives and save lives.

Every redwood tree begins its long life as a small seed. One seed planted in fertile ground grows quickly, producing more benefits every year. To learn how your endowment “seed” can help the College of Pharmacy become securely Evergreen and Ever-Giving, contact Olive Stephens, Planned Giving Administrator, at (909) 469-5211 or by e-mail at ostephen@westernu.edu.
Alumni Relations

WesternU Welcomes A New Director of Alumni Relations

Russel Heskin has been named Director of Alumni Relations at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, Calif.

Heskin has a wealth of alumni experience, most recently serving four years as Associate Director of Alumni Relations for Pomona College, where he worked as part of the alumni relations team to organize more than 100 alumni events annually. He also launched a bimonthly alumni e-newsletter, online alumni community and online alumni event registration, resulting in a record year in reunion attendance, overall alumni event attendance and annual fund giving.

Heskin graduated from UCLA in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in sociology. While a student at UCLA, he devoted most of his extracurricular time to the Student Alumni Association, a student volunteer organization that plans most of UCLA's major campus traditions, as well as other social and career-oriented programs. After graduation, he worked for the UCLA Alumni Association for eight years managing a variety of student, young alumni and career programs.

You can reach the Office of Alumni Relations by e-mail at alumni@westernu.edu or call us at (909) 469-5274.

Jobs for Alumni: Interested in finding a new job or just seeing what is out there? Check out the job postings for alumni at the Alumni Career Resources Center on the university website at www.westernu.edu.

Share Your News and Revise Personal Information: Have you recently married, had a baby, started a new job, or received a fantastic promotion? Update WesternU on your achievements so that we can share them with your fellow classmates. Please send any news to alumni@westernu.edu.