

News Features

News & Publications

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Medical Missions: Changing Lives, Making a Difference

The Dr. Tom Dooley stipend recipients shared their medical mission experiences with fellow students, friends and Notre Dame alumni at the society's Football Saturday Lecture on September 8, 2012.

The students expressed their appreciation to the Dooley Society for enabling them to go to the most impoverished places on earth. They worked alongside volunteers and professionals that cared deeply about their responsibilities and sometimes they took the place of negligent doctors. These students didn't stand back and observe, they stepped in and contributed as best they could in difficult work environments.

Gwen Hooley took vitals in a hospital in rural Ghana that lacked even gloves. The emergency room was open-aired and even a lizard joined the staff in the operating room. Anne Conover assisted an ophthalmologist in India that coped with continual electrical brownouts — she shined a flashlight in a patient's eyes and assisted in making a diagnosis. Joe McCrary worked in Haitian clinics that were held in schools, churches and private homes. He shared a photo of a clinic that was nothing more than three tables where the medical staff met with patients and a fourth table for medicines. It was McCrary's first trip to a third-world country. "Everyone was selling something, but there was no one there to buy," he said.

Michael Ozga saw how the lack of documentation or even a simple triage system hampered care in Peru. In a Bolivian children's center, the only doctor left Shivani Goel alone to cope with situations that most pre-med students will never experience. Goel spoke of worm-infested sores, unsanitary conditions and the lack of resources to help a child in an epileptic seizure.

And yet, every student expressed gratitude. "Life-changing experience" was used more than once in their presentations and every presentation closed with a heartfelt "thank you" to the Dr. Tom Dooley Society for making their medical missions possible.

The Dr. Tom Dooley Society is a group of Notre Dame Alumni in the medical and health care professions that are organized for the purpose of 1) professional development and continuing education, 2) mentorship of undergraduates, medical students and residents, and 3) global service to humanity. Every year, the society awards a select group of Notre Dame students with a stipend. The award assists the students with the travel and incidental expenses associated with their participation in an international medical mission.

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