Program: PODEMOS Medical Brigade
Location: El Progreso, Honduras
Rank: Second-Year Medical Student
Major: Medicine

“I chose the PODEMOS program because I knew that it would be a great experience for me as a second year medical student to practice my skills in medicine including physical exam skills, as well as practicing medical reasoning to arrive at a differential diagnosis. I also chose this program because it gave me the opportunity to help Honduras, and specifically the people who live 20 minutes away from where I grew up. I spent the first 18 years of my life in El Progreso, Honduras, and PODEMOS gave me the opportunity to come back to where I grew up and spend a week traveling to rural villages around El Progreso, to learn and to help the people there.

Studying abroad has been a great benefit to my college and professional school education because it allows me to develop my skills and put to practice what I have so far only seen and learned from a textbook. I still haven’t reached third year, which is the year where one enters clinical rotations and spends the majority of the time in the hospital learning. So far, I have yet to do that and have learned mostly from PowerPoint presentations, lectures and e-modules. I saw 30 to 40 people in each day for a week while I was in Honduras. It was an amazing opportunity that for each person I had to gather a history, do a physical and then present to a physician what the findings were. The physicians we bring along are crucial to the educational experience of the students. They let themedical students do the aforementioned, and after the medical student presents, the physicians guide the students through teaching points to arrive at a good medical diagnosis.
Another thing that I enjoyed about this trip was the fact that we also have pharmacists, nurses, student pharmacists and student nurses. This was nice because it gave us a good experience with working with other healthcare professionals, which we will do once we graduate medical school. Overall, this trip has helped me broaden my skills as a student physician and has underscored the importance of taking the medical education seriously.

My favorite memory of my study abroad experience was a patient with temporal arteritis, which is basically an inflammation of the large arteries that is a medical emergency because it can cause blindness and other morbidities if not promptly treated. The patient that presented to our clinic with it had textbook symptoms and we were able to promptly make a diagnosis and send him to the emergency room at a local hospital.

I have to mention that one of my favorite parts of this trip was also the conduction of my research project. I performed an IRB-approved research project in the clinics and I spent half a day every day of clinics for a week asking the men of the communities to answer the questions of my anonymous survey. My research is focusing on identifying the demographics and health status of the men that we see at our clinics in Honduras in order to have a good idea of what sort of changes we can make to better serve the communities that we see.”