

Recognition of Distinction in Global Health

University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine

Clinical Elective: University of Oxford - Oxford, England

Dates of Training: June 9 – August 1, 2025

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Oxford is not only a symbol of academic excellence but also a hub of diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary collaboration. Working alongside researchers and faculty who are leaders in their fields broadened my understanding of medical research on a global scale. I engaged in rich discussions that challenged my assumptions, refined my critical thinking, and deepened my passion for advancing healthcare.

When I first arrived, I carried certain expectations of what my time would look like: structured research, well-defined objectives, and a predictable academic rhythm. What I encountered instead was a more dynamic, fluid environment that required adaptability and initiative. Rather than simply being given a set of instructions, I was asked to take ownership of my project, make decisions about the direction of my work, and justify those decisions in conversation with mentors and peers. This experience taught me that true academic growth comes from stepping into uncertainty and learning how to navigate it with curiosity and resilience.



I gained valuable insights into the methodology of research: how to frame a problem, how to design a question that is both relevant and feasible, and how to analyze findings with both precision and humility. Importantly, I came to appreciate that research is not simply about generating results, but about contributing responsibly to a broader conversation. Medicine, at its best, requires not only technical skill but also the discipline to ask “why” and the courage to recognize when we do not yet have the answers.

Although Oxford itself represents the pinnacle of academic resources, many of the discussions I encountered centered around healthcare delivery in resource-limited settings. I was struck by the contrast: working in a place where the libraries overflow with knowledge and cutting-edge laboratories hum with activity, while simultaneously learning about health systems where even basic supplies are scarce. This juxtaposition forced me to reconsider how medical advances are distributed across the globe. A drug developed in a wealthy country may never reach patients in rural clinics; a brilliant new



intervention may remain inaccessible to those who need it most because of cost, infrastructure, or political barriers. I began to see my role not only as a future physician but also as a mediator between innovation and implementation. If medicine is to serve humanity, it must account for inequities and adapt to different contexts rather than assume a “one-size-fits-all” model. Hearing case studies of healthcare workers in

under-resourced areas taught me the value of ingenuity and adaptability. For example, clinicians making diagnostic decisions without advanced imaging rely instead on sharp clinical judgment honed through experience. Such stories reminded me that resource limitations, while challenging, can also foster creativity and resilience. As I return to my own training, I carry a renewed commitment to thinking

critically about how to apply medical knowledge responsibly, particularly in environments where resources are constrained.

Living in Oxford also allowed me to engage with a vibrant community of international scholars. The cultural and intellectual diversity enriched my experience beyond the academic setting, reminding me that effective medical education must be contextually grounded yet globally informed.

Perhaps the most transformative aspect of my elective was the growth I experienced as both a learner and an emerging physician. I developed greater confidence in my ability to navigate academic spaces, to ask questions without fear of seeming naïve, and to defend my ideas while remaining open to revision. I also learned the value of mentorship, not just as guidance but as a model of professional generosity. My mentors demonstrated what it looks like to hold oneself to high standards while also encouraging others to succeed. At the same time, I became more aware of my own limitations. I realized how much I still have to learn—not only about medicine, but about the systems in which medicine operates and the diverse populations it serves. Rather than discouraging me, this awareness has deepened my sense of humility and responsibility. I left Oxford with a clearer sense of direction: I want to pursue a career that balances clinical practice with academic inquiry, always rooted in the awareness that healthcare must be equitable and accessible to all.

As I reflect on my time in Oxford, I am grateful not only for the skills I acquired but also for the perspective I gained. The elective has strengthened my resolve to contribute meaningfully to the field of medicine—not only by caring for individual patients but also by engaging with broader questions of access, equity, and global health. It has reminded me that while Oxford’s spires may symbolize tradition and excellence, their true value lies in the way they inspire students to look outward, to carry knowledge beyond the walls of the university, and to apply it in service of the wider world.

In short, this experience has shaped not only my academic trajectory but also my identity as a future physician.

