

Medical Student Enrichment Program

University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine

Clinical Elective: Granada, Nicaragua - Clínica Alabama Granada

Dates of Training: June 5, 2017 to June 28, 2017

Student: Taylor Holmes, MS1

Having previously volunteered at Clínica Alabama-Granada during undergrad, I thought I knew what to expect when I arrived almost three years later to work there as a medical student. I was familiar with the clinic's set up, the work flow, and the staff. While I didn't expect things to be



dramatically different this time around, I found myself having an entirely new experience during the four weeks we were there. Every work station at the clinic presented new challenges that I hadn't foreseen and new bits of knowledge that I uncovered along the way. While shadowing the doctors, I was able to apply the physical exam skills we have learned during our first year of medical school. I was able to fine tune my techniques, practice presenting my findings to the doctors, and start to accurately differentiate between normal and abnormal findings. The physicians at Clínica Alabama made it a point to

teach us small bits of clinical knowledge with every patient we saw and show us how to do more with less resources.

Perhaps more important than all the clinical skills I learned, the most challenging (and rewarding) part of our time at the clinic was not spent shadowing the doctors. The most valuable part of our time was spent interacting with patients during triage. Every patient presented a new challenge as I worked through the many barriers to earn their trust. Despite the language differences, finding the words in Spanish to communicate with the patients was not the hardest part of earning their trust. Establishing a relationship with each patient was largely built on trying to understand their situation, their family, and their life. Many patients traveled hours to make it to clinic and even more lacked the resources necessary to maintain their health at home. Understanding these aspects of their life and tailoring your conversation with those things in mind was the most important part of creating a relationship with the patient.

My four weeks at Clínica Alabama-Granada were more than just an international rotation. They reinforced the concepts we have been learning. They reminded me to treat the patient and not just the disease. And more importantly, they showed me the power of knowledge and education when resources are bare. The clinic and its patients hold a special place in my heart, and I hope that I am able to return soon!

Taylor Holmes