

LETTERS

A Medical Outreach Elective Course

To the Editor. The article by Perry et al presents a very vital aspect of pharmacy education that addresses the care for people who are underserved.¹ They describe an elective that provides valuable student opportunities, including an international medical outreach trip that fits within the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) guidelines. However, the expenses of an international medical outreach trip may deter interested students from taking this elective, as deter colleges and schools of pharmacy from adopting the elective.

Colleges and schools that are thinking about implementing a curriculum in medical outreach should consider local opportunities in which the same goals, objectives, and changes in student perceptions can be achieved. As a recent pharmacy school graduate who has been on both local and international medical outreach trips, I can relate to the positive impact they have had of bringing a different perspective of providing patient care and working in an interdisciplinary team. Unfortunately, international outreach trips can be very costly. Students from this course spent approximately \$2,500.¹

However, there are a variety of local medical outreach experiences available where students can receive similar experiences with less financial burden.

During my last year in pharmacy school, I volunteered with a nonprofit group called Remote Area Medical that provides free comprehensive health care to people in remote areas of the United States.² In 1 weekend, I was able to provide care to hundreds of people who had been lined up for days to receive the only health care they would receive all year. This local medical outreach provided an equally valuable experience compared to the international medical trip that I took, but with minimal costs.

In the words of author Marianne Williamson, "In every community there is work to be done. In every nation there are wounds to heal. In every heart there is the power to do it."

Ashley Higbea, PharmD
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center- St. Margaret,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

REFERENCES

1. Perry E, Storer A, Caldwell D, Smith J. A medical outreach elective course. *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2013;77(4):Article 78.
2. Remote Area Medical. Remote Area Medical [home page]. Accessed August 28, 2013.