

## Dispatch from Peru

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Living in Seattle the past couple of years, I'd forgotten what hot truly felt like, but when I got off the plane in Iquitos, Peru, it was *hot*; the sun blared overhead, feeling significantly more intense than it had when I was further from the Equator just the morning before. From the airport my medical team and I traveled to the hospital and this is where the real fun began. Our first day was spent preparing for the patients we'd be seeing the following day - we set up a pharmacy, sorted medications into pre-labeled bags with instructions in Spanish, and organized the rooms in a fashion so patients could be seen. It may have not been the prettiest set up by any means, but it was functional and got the job done.

The next morning when we arrived at the hospital, I was surprised to see a large line of people already standing outside and waiting to be seen. This continued to be a theme each subsequent day, and each day the patients seemed excited to see us. While it is easy to show up and hand out medication, if a patient doesn't have primary care follow up then we've done nothing more than put a Band-Aid on an open wound. When participating in these sorts of international trips it's always important to keep in mind whether or not we're creating a positive, lasting, and meaningful impact. That wasn't an issue on this trip as DOCARE always has the support of the local government or healthcare providers. This means we were able to refer patients for appropriate follow-up care to local providers, as was the case with a child who presented with tuberculosis. Because of our connections with local healthcare providers, we were able to get this patient set up with a full course of treatment for what can be a very serious illness in children.

So what did I gain personally from this trip? While this wasn't my first international trip, nor was it my first trip to a Spanish-speaking country, I significantly improved upon my medical Spanish. I also gained a greater knowledge of dermatology from our team dermatologist; an in-depth view of how to appropriately triage patients based on acuity from our emergency medicine physicians, and participated in lectures in regards to antibiotic stewardship from our infectious disease doctor. Our team



was truly well rounded. Most importantly, though, I gained a greater sense of cultural competence and awareness of the hardships the population of Iquitos experiences in accessing medical care. That is something that I would not have gained without the AOC Travel Grant and am extremely thankful that I was able to partake in such a profound experience.