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Global Brigades, a student-led international development organization, takes action through a variety of disciplines, including medicine. Global Medical Brigades (GMB) at UCLA, part of Global Brigades, offers missions throughout the year. UCLA-trained physicians have volunteered to provide comprehensive health services in rural communities with limited access to healthcare in Ghana, Honduras and Panama. Each community receives a brigade every three to four months, during which hundreds of patients are treated. Between these missions, the in-country team maintains relationships with the communities to provide follow up and conducts community health worker trainings to empower local leaders to perpetuate a consistent level of healthcare.

Robert “Bob” A. Goldberg, M.D. '83 (RES '87, FEL '88 and '89) and Jan K. Takasugi, M.D. '83

For our family vacation in 2009, Jan and I took our children Kevin and Gina on a GMB mission to Honduras. I thought the best part was working with the college students from UCSB and UCLA. For most of them, it was their first exposure to medicine. I was impressed with their idealism and with their enthusiasm to learn. The first day, we arrived at a small village and the patients were lined up around the block by the time we got there. There were almost 700 patients, and we had only eight doctors. It was a struggle to see everybody. That evening after dinner, we made a classroom out of the dining room and taught courses in medical history taking and medical assisting. Instead of just observing, the students were assigned to work as medical assistants. We were able to see far more patients and the students got a real sense of medical practice. It was a thrill to see them working hard, gaining self-confidence, and really making a difference in the lives of these grateful patients.



From left to right: Bob Goldberg, M.D., with daughter Gina, son Kevin and families lined up outside the clinic ready to be treated.
Photo courtesy of Bob Goldberg, M.D.

We were fortunate to have an impressive, talented group of physicians who loved teaching. Several specialties were involved, including family practice, surgery, orthopedics, and ophthalmology, so it was a mini medical school with not only the students, but also the physicians learning from each other as they diagnosed and treated a wide variety of diseases. Even though I do charity work at home, there's nothing like the experience of going to a community that has no other access to medical care, no insurance or payment involved, and people so grateful for the care they receive. The physicians and students especially enjoyed the opportunity to create a genuine human bond with the delightful families that we met in these charming rural



villages. Being with these young, idealistic students reminded me of the wonder of being a physician, and brought me back to my own days as a young student of medicine.

From left to right (seated back row): Jan Takasugi, M.D., Bob Goldberg, M.D., with students seeing patients in the clinic, which was set up in the village church.

Photo courtesy of Bob Goldberg, M.D.

Doug Katsev, M.D. (FEL '90)

My daughters, who were attending UCLA (Kiki) and Berkeley (Cailyn), and I joined Bob Goldberg, M.D., Jan Takasugi, M.D. and their two children on a GMB trip to Honduras in 2009. The team consisted of approximately 100 people, mostly undergraduates from UCLA and UCSB. Everyone spent their vacation time to volunteer. The group had extraordinary talents. Although the team was diverse, the common factor was a big, giving heart! Being around college students with an incredible appetite to learn was refreshing. I was impressed that these young adults understood that to have a fulfilled life, it is more about what you give than what you receive.

Although Bob and I had been friends for a long time, having both families together on a medical mission created a bond that will never break. Unlike most family vacations, the memory of this trip strengthens with time, rather than fades.



Kiki Katsev with local children outside the clinic.



Doug Katsev, M.D. and Cailyn Katsev in surgery.

As a volunteer eye surgeon, I have traveled to every continent to perform cataract and corneal surgery. The ability to take what I learned from my medical education to help the underprivileged see better and guide the next generation cannot be overstated. I have participated in two GMB trips to Honduras (2008 and 2009). If you are ever fortunate to be asked to be a part of a GMB mission, suppress any fears you have and go without question. Your life and those around you will be forever changed. True happiness comes from a lifestyle of giving to others.

Gregory L. Hirsch, M.D. '78 (RES '8 1, FEL '83)



Gregory Hirsch, M.D. in front of the clinic.



In May 2011, I traveled to Francisco Morazán FMO, located in the central part of Honduras, to volunteer on a GMB mission. I went at the suggestion and invitation of my UCLA college roommate and closest friend, who also is a physician. We joined a team comprising an American nurse practitioner, two Honduran doctors, and 20 pre-med/nursing students who were taught to take vital signs, point out findings, and listen to the heart and lungs. Each day, the team saw approximately 150 patients, ranging in all ages, for basic care, such as hypertension, diabetes, infections, parasites, immunizations, etc. Some patients walked or rode horses down from the hills to reach the clinic. With the desire to provide care for everyone in the area, the team drove in a four wheel drive vehicle into the hills to see people who could not travel to the clinic.

I went on this mission because I've always wanted to go to an impoverished country to help people from a different culture. It was exhausting and exhilarating at the same time. The people were very warm and gracious. I intend to do it again in the future.

Local patients waiting for the clinic to open.
Photos courtesy of Gregory Hirsch, M.D.

Delila Poulder, (M.D. '17)

UCLA Medical Alumni Association Board Student Representative for Class of 2017, traveled to Santa Cruz, Honduras as a pre-med student in January 2012.

It is through such valuable experiences as Global Medical Brigade that I was able to witness the application of basic science concepts to clinical decision-making and the development of profound patient-doctor relationship that reaffirmed my decision to pursue a career in medicine.

For more information on Global Brigades, visit globalbrigades.org.

