Woll Family Foundation Provides Opportunities for International Health Experiences

An ongoing donation to the University of Michigan Medical School by Drs. Douglas and Margo Yellin Woll will eventually become the Woll Family Global Health Opportunities Endowed Fund. The Endowed Fund will be used to assist and support exceptional third or fourth year UMMS students in pursuing and engaging in an international clinical experience, preferably in the form of a one- or two-month clinical clerkship in an underserved area in a developing country. The objective is to facilitate exposure of medical students to patients in limited medical resource environments in order to provide a deeper and fuller understanding of the presentation and course of various medical conditions as well as related clinical, social, political, and ethical issues. The donors hope the students will obtain both valuable knowledge and deep insight into various disease states, many of which will present at later stages than seen in resource-rich environments like the United States.

In early 2013, M4 students Morgan Mihok and Nathan Stern were selected as the first Woll Family Global Health Opportunities Scholars. Ms. Mihok and Mr. Stern earned awards to support their clinical elective in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Ghana/Korle Bu Teaching Hospital. The University of Ghana Medical School is one of four medical schools in Ghana, and Korle Bu Teaching Hospital is the premier healthcare facility in the country (and the only tertiary care center in the southern part of Ghana).

During their month in Ghana, they attended classes and rotations with Ghanaian medical students and spent time with house officers and midwives in a variety of clinics. Despite the fact that, throughout most of their stay, doctors and pharmacists were on a nationwide strike, several doctors at Korle-Bu continued to teach, perform deliveries, and manage other emergent care. The students were exposed to both normal and complicated deliveries, training in the provision of long-term family planning methods, and issues associated with Ghana’s National Health Insurance program. They were also able to participate in a 2-day family planning conference in Accra.

“In no small part because of this rotation, I’ve committed to doing the policy and advocacy track in my residency program, as this will allow me to delve quickly into the heart of those issues that affect my patients and the type of care I can provide.”
– M4 Morgan Mihok

M1s Nathan Stern and Morgan Mihok attending a family planning conference (above) and Morgan (above right) in the family planning clinic
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M4 students Charlotte Gamble and Laura Newcomb were selected as the 2014 Woll Family Global Health Opportunities Scholars. Both used their awards to support clinical electives in obstetrics and gynecology; Ms Gamble at the St. Paul’s Hospital Millennium Medical College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Ms. Newcomb at the University of Ghana/Korle Bu Teaching Hospital.

Choosing to do their medical electives in resource-poor countries provided a broader view of diagnostic and treatment options for normal OB/GYN deliveries and situations, but also exposure to more advanced stages of diseases than they would normally see in the United States. Both were assigned to teams of medical students and residents, joining them on rounds and for lectures, learning about long-term family planning methods, providing assistance with women in labor and with deliveries, conducting physical exams and triaging patients in clinic, and observing major operations.

“Interacting with a different patient population than what I am used to helped me to become a culturally sensitive provider who understands and appreciates the various barriers to healthcare and issues that come up for an increasingly diverse patient population here at home.”

– M4 Laura Newcomb

“Women in Ethiopia are like women in Ghana, in Cameroon, in French Guiana, and in Detroit, Michigan–they are strong.

The marks of poverty are also similar.”

– M4 Charlotte Gamble