JULY 2017 PHOTOVOICE
This picture was not my favorite initially. It wasn’t until I got home and I was talking to my sister on the phone about my trip, that she said, "Melissa, I absolutely love that picture of you giving the medicine to the baby. Everyone is smiling so genuinely, and I know that face you are making so well and it is when you are the happiest.” I knew exactly which picture she was talking about, and could recall exactly that home visit. It was probably my favorite patient day of the whole trip. Those who were with me, I’m sure can remember it, too, as it was both a shocking and emotional visit. However, I believe the picture says it all, even amongst tears, affliction and desperate worry, joy can be found.
Although this picture consists of only a small portion of our group, it accurately defines several themes from this trip: collaboration, diversity, beauty, flexibility, and happiness. This photo was taken at the end of our home visits in Panajachel, which required effective teamwork for the patient to receive optimal care. The day was filled with laughter as we formed new relationships and strengthened old. Our driver (Don Cesar) heard us gawking over the view of Lake Atitlán and was kind enough to stop at an overlook so we could take a few moments to enjoy the beauty of Guatemala. This picture not only shows the willingness of people from variable backgrounds to come together and help those who are less fortunate, but also depicts how rich someone with so little can feel when surrounded by both beauty and happiness.
On the first day of home visits we visited Carlos, a toddler suffering from malnutrition and developmental delays. His aunt and grandmother take care of him while his mother, a victim of domestic abuse, works throughout the day. Grandma greeted us with kisses on the cheek and welcomed us into her home as if we were part of the family.
The patients we worked with were so appreciative to know that someone was managing their acute complaints, chronic disease states, and general well-being. They were very interested in learning about their medications and taking control of their health. Home visits gave me a unique insight to how patients spend their time outside of clinic, while supporting those with less access to health care. Providing education to motivated health professionals was an amazing experience and I am excited to use these skills throughout my career. Rotating through the clinic stations in Guatemala provided me with knowledge about how to offer the best possible care despite barriers such as language and low resources. I know I can use this clinical and personal knowledge to overcome similar obstacles in the future.
My experience in Guatemala was highly diversified. Among the various clinic sites and home visits we were able to help many patients. My favorite part of the trip was learning about the customs and heritage of the people we met. They are all very open to sharing their experiences. The home visits were another favorite part of the trip for me because they provide a look into the life of the patients we saw. It becomes easier as health care providers to see what lifestyle changes are feasible for patients when you get to step inside their homes. Overall, it was wonderful to meet such caring people in a beautiful country and to be able to work with doctors, residents, interpreters, to provide care to many patients.
ANDREW GLOBKE

This picture means the most to me because it is a symbol of caring. I think the trip was very fun and exciting, but I think the thing that allowed us to truly have a great life experience was helping and educating those in extreme poverty, with limited access to healthcare. I think it is important to empower those people to take charge of their healthcare in the absence of quality care and medical supplies. As long as a group continues to come back, these people will live long, happy lives and will be able to manage their disease states well enough and for long enough until we return. This trip will affect my life forever, I will forever be grateful for what I have here in the United States – clean water, abundant food, quality drainage systems, hot showers, etc – and be ever-respectful of that and will have a new outlook on how I will provide care to indigenous or impoverished people.
MARY MATTERN

My favorite part of the trip without doubt was the week spent in Chocola. There are so many reasons why this week left a lasting experience, but I have chosen a photo of only people because ultimately it was the people of Chocola who impacted me the most. For this reflection, I would like to break it down into specific groups of people— the family of San Pedro, the health workers of Clinica Miller, the townspeople of Chocola and my future patients.

The family of San Pedro absolutely set up the perfect location for promoting strong group dynamics. In a town where there is limited tourism and restaurants, our group of physicians, interpreters, and pharmacists easily bonded over nights of card games, home-made food, and conversations. I began to know these people better than I knew most of the people I have worked with for over a year now and refreshingly, conversations of humanity, politics, and even religion at times were covered as I imagine people once did in society and still do when distractions are limited.
MARY MATTERN

The health workers of Clinica Miller were phenomenal! Witnessing a well functioning health care team is truly inspiring. The women in this photo are who have made change possible for this community. After seeing the continuity in care the patients in this clinic have, I can’t imagine working overseas with anything less than what Wuqu Kawak provides especially including the education, the empowerment, and the frequent check-ins. I will still never forget how awesome it was to hear a mother talk about all the things she learned about nutrition from Wuqu Kawak, even saying, “I had no idea spinach had so much iron, so now I cook scrambled eggs with spinach whenever I can get it.” This is change at the foundational level, exactly where change is needed.

The townspeople of Chocola also contributed a large amount to the enjoyment of my trip and leads me to also discuss my future patients because it was the people of this rural, country, non-touristy area that reminded me how important it is to my happiness, that I work in this environment and with these kind of people. Perhaps it won’t be in Guatemala, but I will be searching for that small, rural town somewhere in the Midwest that reminds me of the values seen in this town—hard-work, simplicity, appreciation, and community.