

Executive Summary

The Iowa Medical Society Foundation (IMSF) has provided 19 scholarships for University of Iowa (11) and Des Moines University (8) medical students for funding of their Global Health Clerkships. This scholarship supports students whose experience relates to health education and promotion, enhances the delivery of quality care, or improves the public's perception of medicine in medically underserved areas, both international and domestic.

Natalie Lohman, OMS4 of Des Moines University (Graduated Spring of 2026)

Location: Saint Lucia and Lima, Peru

Goals of trip:

- Learn more about ethical international partnerships with hospitals and how to practice medicine in lower resource settings.
- Learn medical Spanish to be better able to care for Spanish-speaking patients in my career, and to see a different health system's approach to caring for children.
- Engage in international settings to broaden perspectives that will bring much more fulfillment out of her career.



Natalie's experience in Saint Lucia provided insight beyond the island's natural beauty and tourism industry, offering a closer look at the realities of healthcare delivery in a resource-limited setting. Rather than working in a traditional hospital, she trained in a repurposed Olympic stadium that had housed St. Jude Hospital since a fire destroyed the original hospital building 15 years earlier.

One patient encounter especially highlighted differences in healthcare access. While rotating on the pediatric service, she helped care for a child with sickle cell disease who presented with altered mental status and intermittent shortness of breath. Although influenza was circulating locally, no testing was available, and a head CT to evaluate for stroke could not be obtained until the following day because transportation to an off-site imaging center had to be arranged. The delays illustrated how resources commonly available in the United States were often limited on the island. Despite these barriers, the patient improved with supportive care, antibiotics, hydration, and blood transfusions, demonstrating the effectiveness and adaptability of the local healthcare team.

Beyond the hospital, she found the people of Saint Lucia welcoming and deeply proud of their culture and community. The experience strengthened her interest in global and rural health and inspired her to consider returning in the future to provide specialty care or medical education. She described the rotation as a meaningful reminder that medicine extends beyond geography and resources, emphasizing shared humanity, cultural connection, and responsibility for caring for others.

She was particularly impressed by the versatility of Saint Lucian physicians, who often balanced inpatient care, outpatient clinics, and neonatal care within the same day. At the same time, the experience revealed how geography, limited specialty access, and healthcare infrastructure challenges contributed to disparities in care. Working in this setting deepened her understanding of rural and resource-conscious medicine and highlighted the systems required to provide equitable healthcare in isolated communities.

Humanity in Medicine

(A Creative Writing Piece) By Natalie Lohmann

Health is a great equalizer
No matter where you travel
The body malfunctions
Injuries occur
And humanity looks to medicine for a cure

Hypertension, diabetes, sepsis
Broken bones, pregnancy
These are universal
Therefore, medicine is universal

Medicine gives such unique access
To life
To all peoples
You can truly care for the world
For everyone has a body
That can be listed to,
Tested, imaged,
To make meaning out of experience
To make a diagnosis

The job—to treat patients
Can simply be that
Analyze symptoms, test, diagnose, fix
But in the process, you can also
Listen, feel, empathize with suffering



Share in the joys of health
You can witness such meaningful
moments
A mom's first look at her baby
A father carrying in their sick child
A family saying goodbye

In medicine, that is the job I most enjoy
—to bear witness to life

It is truly captivating
Human nature, relationships
People's will to survive
The body's resiliency
The comfort of a smile,
Of a hand held
That is why I love travel as well
People may seem so different
And yet I see evidence every day of how alike
We truly are
Humanity, not simply medicine
The most perplexing study of all

