



Dear Alumni and Friends:



It is sometimes easy to forget, as we make our way in haste through the bustling halls, clinics, labs and lecture rooms of the Medical School, that medicine at Michigan reaches far beyond the Ann Arbor campus and satellite clinics of the U-M Health System. This issue of *Medicine at Michigan* highlights two of the extraordinary ways in which the brilliance and commitment that characterize our school and health system are taken to some of the farthest reaches of our planet, often to those who need it most desperately.

It is at once remarkable and to be expected, given the caliber of students who study medicine and biomedical research at the U-M, that many of the international initiatives which bear the Michigan name started at the student level (page 20). From isolated ideas and individual efforts has grown a coordinated approach to international experiences, forming a powerful program we know as Global REACH (Research, Education and Collaboration in Health). The program's mission is to facilitate collaboration among Medical School faculty, students and our global partners for the benefit of patients worldwide.

Under the auspices of Global REACH, students network with other students and faculty members to organize excursions to Central America, Africa and Asia, to small communities where health care is often virtually nonexistent. To learn, to educate, to treat and hopefully cure: These are the reasons students undertake missions to assess and improve health conditions in places too poor to accomplish such strides on their own. From conducting clinics and vaccination programs to educating communities on local diet and nutrition, our students are making a difference worldwide, without regard to geopolitical boundaries, and learning in the process how to achieve maximum medical benefit from minimal health care resources.

Throughout the Health System, teams of physicians, residents and nurses likewise organize travel to nations lacking our resources, volunteering their Michigan expertise in diagnosis, treatment and surgery to people who otherwise have little or

no access to quality health care or advanced procedures (page 30). Dozens of surgeries performed within a week are not uncommon for short-term missions, but that impact is compounded many times over by giving medical personnel in these countries the opportunity to observe improved techniques and updated methods of care. Helping to establish eye banks in Mongolia, providing doctors with the latest techniques for helping children with disabilities in Malawi, working to secure needed equipment and supplies for communities in Guatemala — in ways such as these, U-M health care professionals are sharing their knowledge and skills.

In an age when disease can travel as fast and as far as jet airplanes, and cultures merge in the conduct of global business, it is the obligation of any great academic institution to bring its resources to bear on problems and issues outside the strict confines and limits of its campus, city or state. In concert with teaching students to provide medical care in the context of the individual patient — accounting for and accommodating cultural factors such as religion, lifestyle, ethnicity and socioeconomic status — it behooves us to provide students with the opportunity to experience and help improve health care and social conditions in other countries. It behooves us also to march forward in the world — in a culturally sensitive fashion — to share what we have learned and what we can do, to improve lives lived far from our own backyards, and to continually raise standards of care wherever we can.

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The education that comes from international experiences is invaluable to our students. The good that is accomplished by these missions — those of students and those of seasoned physicians — is immeasurable. Everyone associated with the U-M Medical School can and should feel great pride in the dedication and heroic efforts of all who are seeking to improve health care and conditions throughout the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Allen S. Lichter'.

Allen S. Lichter (M.D. 1972)
Dean