Medical Outreach for Developing Nations including Jamaica

Nova Southeastern University's medical school recently expanded its international medical outreach programs to serve more developing nations with medical and humanitarian aid from medical students.

Countries such as Vietnam have been added to the list of nations that already receive medical outreach from NSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM). Those nations include Jamaica, Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina.

In December, second-year medical students will take time off from their winter vacations to travel abroad to rural and medically underserved communities in Vietnam, Peru, and Jamaica to provide medical services such as physicals, cancer screenings, and other medical examinations.

Many of these medically underserved patients from poor, rural communities have never seen a physician before and suffer from illnesses such as tuberculosis, scabies, malnutrition, hypertension, and diabetes. The students, supervised by the college's medical faculty and local physicians, are bringing medical supplies and provide health and wellness lessons to help patients live healthier lives.

"We decided to expand the medical outreach programs to reach out to more countries that need medical services because there is a great need," said Robin J. Jacobs, Ph.D., M.S.W., director of international medical programs and associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral medicine, preventive medicine, biomedical informatics, and public health. "The outreach programs serve two purposes: they benefit patients living in communities that lack sufficient health care and provide our students with hands-on medical training. Also, the experience provides students an opportunity to learn about other cultures."

In addition to volunteering their vacation time, participating students will pay anywhere from 1,100 to $3,800 for trip expenses (includes travel, lodging food, and administrative costs). The COM international medical outreach programs will continue this spring with a trip to Ecuador and a summer trip to Jamaica.