



Global Partnerships and Engagement in Osteopathic Medical Education

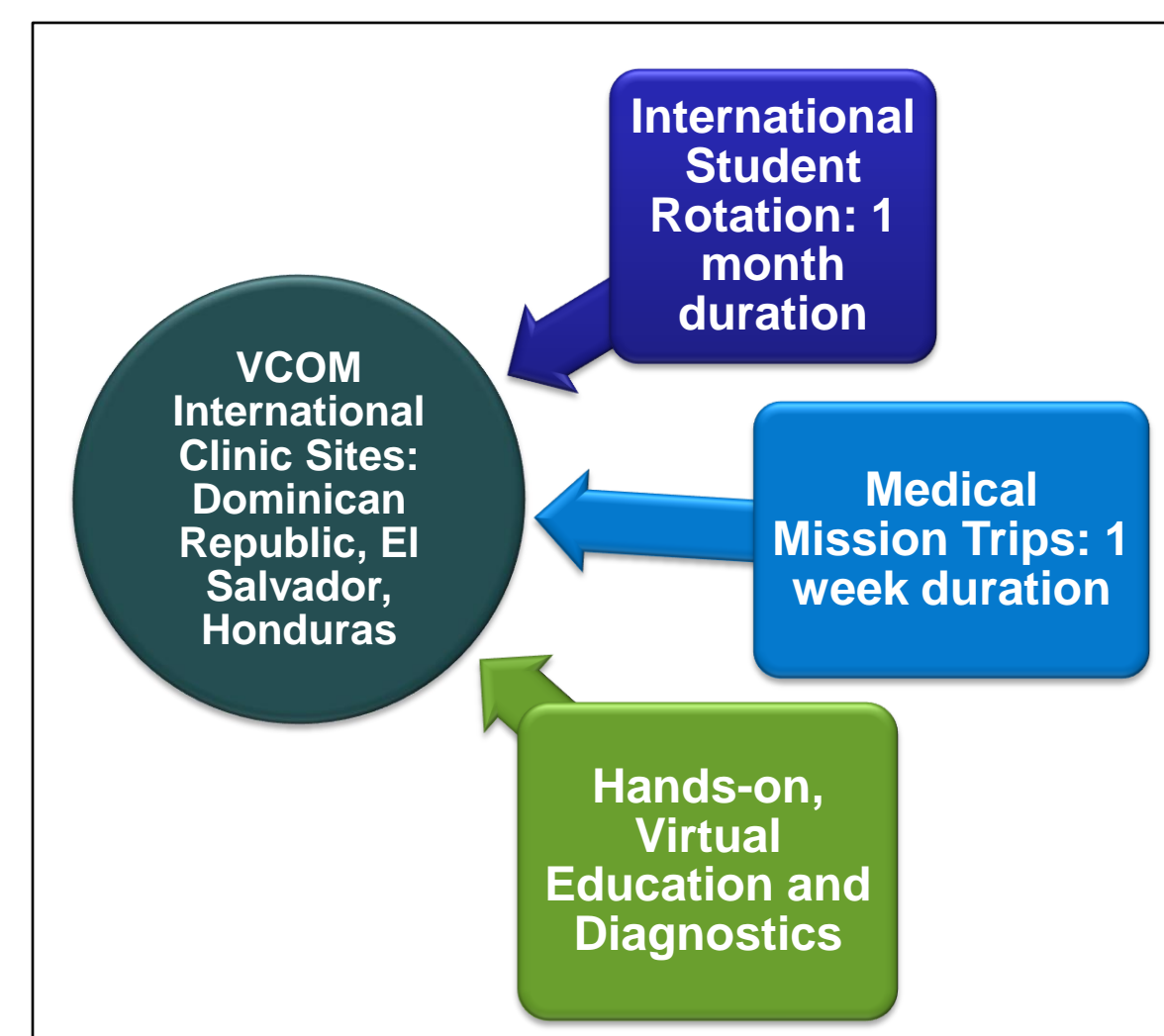
Dixie Tooke-Rawlins, DO; H. Dean Sutphin, PhD, MS; Sarah Zalud-Cerrato, MPH
Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Blacksburg, Virginia



Introduction: Global Medical Education

Medical education requires a global approach and partnership to engage students in cultural sensitivity and skill development to address major health challenges that span borders and continents.

The Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine's (VCOM) international health and outreach program includes three full-time international sites for student rotation, collaborative education and improved diagnostics, and episodic medical outreach trips on acute care and public health to ensure the long term sustainability of in-country clinics. There are seamless hands-on and virtual education and diagnostic components with international sites.



One-Week Medical Mission Trips

VCOM offers multiple medical outreach trips to each site during student breaks. Trip participants include 20-25 students and 3-5 VCOM faculty members (a total of 180-225 per year). Students and faculty engage in health promotion and prevention activities through field clinics, surveys, vaccination campaigns, and basic community and public health outreach activities, and deliver basic medical care.

Recent outreach trips include "Women's Health" trip to the Dominican Republic; "Pediatric Care" trip to El Salvador; "Flood Disaster Relief and Primary Care" to Honduras. Upcoming trips include: a trip that will introduce students to surgery in a developing country, and primary care medical outreach in Honduras; and "Emergency Medicine and Disaster Preparedness in the Dominican Republic." Students who participate in medical outreach trips reflect on their experiences, specific cases, and the impact on their medical education through writing case studies published in VCOM's *Medical Mission Journal*.

One-Month International Student Rotations

Each year, VCOM offers approximately 90 3rd and 4th year medical students the opportunity to complete one or two-month international rotations in one of VCOM's three international partner sites. During their in-country experience, medical students observe and treat diseases not typical in the U.S., while also witnessing how poverty and lack of access to appropriate medical care can affect patients and communities. Students work closely with VCOM's in-country doctors to learn about the country health system and practices.



Partner Institutions and Clinics Participate with the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine Education and Diagnostics

VCOM Clinic & Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

VCOM Clinic & Universidad Evangelica de El Salvador

San Salvador, El Salvador

VCOM Clinic & Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Hands-on, Virtual Education & Diagnostics

Hands-on medical education begins with limited experiences during short-term one-week mission trips, sequentially building to higher levels during the one-month under-served care rotations in 3rd and 4th years. Students complete several U.S. rotations to ensure sufficient skills prior to departing internationally where they receive daily lectures by international doctors, develop power points on tropical diseases and study and treat diseases.

Virtual education is integrated throughout the student experience by an extensive electronic library, on-line course materials, lectures, and video conferencing grand rounds. Seamless international access by wireless internet, on-site libraries and video conferencing keep students engaged. An interactive video conference Global Seminar on case studies in Health and Environment connect students in medical schools in each country.

Diagnosis of diseases and treatment by in-country doctors is supplemented by using interactive electronic technology previously described and pilot novel applications of ultrasound image transfer from remote sites to specialists in the U.S.

Knowledge to Practice through a Continuum

The international program follows a continuum logic model of introduction to immersion. *First*, students elect 1-week mission trips in 1st and 2nd year. *Second*, based on these short term experiences, students elect one or more month-long international rotation(s) where they also support mission trips. *Third and concurrently*, students complete medical curriculum, gain practical clinical experience, rotate in hospitals, study tropical diseases, and gain understanding of culture. Students who participate in this curriculum may choose a Global Health Fellowship program. The program is completed over a three-year period, MS3, MS4, MS5, and the student has the opportunity to complete an online MPH or PhD program with one of our affiliate universities.

Discussion

Global partnerships form a network of VCOM-run international clinics and participating hospitals that participate in a carefully planned learning sequence spanning from mission trips to month-long rotations. Students and doctors engaged with hands-on and virtual education and virtually-assisted diagnoses are developing a new generation of globally-minded physicians.

For more information on international outreach at the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, please contact Dr. H. Dean Sutphin, Assistant Vice President for International Outreach, dsutphin@vcom.vt.edu



Medical students serving in VCOM international clinic locations