INTRODUCTION

• One in four students enrolled in medical schools today is an osteopathic student (1).
• Approximately 26% of graduating US medical students enrolled in allopathic medical programs participated in a global health experience (medical elective rotation or a medical service trip) (2).
• It is unclear what percentage of osteopathic medical students participate in opportunities in Global Health. However the inherent desire to volunteer and an interest in training in Global Health suggest that osteopathic medical students will continue to engage in more medical service trips or osteopathic medical outreach opportunities abroad (3).
• At ACOM a model for a sustainable osteopathic medical outreach activity abroad which involved the commitment of the institution to supporting student’s cause has been created (4).
• It can be challenging to develop a safe and sustainable osteopathic medical outreach trip abroad that supports the student’s interest in Global Health year after year and which continues to improve in satisfaction and experiences as reported by the participants.
• We present here our experience on how we were able to improve the level of satisfaction as expressed by our student participants.

OBJECTIVES

1) To present the challenges in addressing student concerns after completing an osteopathic medical outreach trip abroad.
2) To present a plan for engaging our international partnerships to help us address student concerns and further improve the osteopathic medical outreach trip experience year after year.

The initial challenges following each medical service trip and how those were addressed in later trips completed by the students. Based on Literature-based best practice recommendations for student short term medical trips (adapted from Dainton et al.)

- Challenge 1: To develop sustainability
  - With continuous communication and collaboration between volunteers and local clinic organizer
  - By promoting cultural awareness
- Challenge 2: To develop an educational goal
- Challenge 3: To develop efficiency
  - With more publicly of service trip on campus
  - With more productivity (involvement of faculty and other local physicians/healthcare workers)
- Challenge 4: To positively impact the rural clinics while maintaining patient and medical student safety
  - By getting appropriate authorization from local officials
  - By acknowledgment of all local personnel involved
  - With evaluation of post-trip feedback
- Challenge 5: To increase preparedness
  - With pre-departure training
  - With student volunteer screening to match interests
  - With more language proficiency training of volunteers
  - With more adequate lodging and resources available
- Challenge 6: Cost effectiveness
  - With assessment of cost to volunteers
  - With more planning and transparency on overall costs of service trip activities

Figure 1: Diagram illustrating the challenges in developing an Osteopathic Medical Outreach Activity that has progressed over the past four years. Faculty member Melinda Ledbetter with ACOM students in rural town of Ambuqui, Imbabura

METHODS

• Every summer Since 2015, a small group of ACOM medical students accompanied by ACOM faculty have traveled abroad to complete a weeklong osteopathic medical outreach trip in the same rural communities of Imbabura, Ecuador. At the completion of each trip students were surveyed for quality improvement, satisfaction and overall experience using Qualtrics. A comparison was made to other established medical trips that were completed in collaboration with other medical schools. Student concerns were then addressed on the trips that followed leading to improvement in the planning process and better coordination of activities with our collaborators abroad.
• Below are sample questions that were asked using Qualtrics:
  - What were the greatest challenges of the Medical trip?
  - What strengths did you notice regarding the administration of this trip?
  - Describe the quality of the orientation for this trip, either by trip administrators or at the sites.

RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Needs Improvement</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement - 5 Excellent</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate the opportunities for shadowing at the sites. (1 being Needs Improvement - 5 being Excellent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>2016 (Other-remote)</th>
<th>2016 (Other-remote)</th>
<th>2018 (Other-remote)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Improvement - 5 Excellent</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Other represents trips organized by other well established osteopathic medical program.

CONCLUSIONS

• The increasing participation of US physicians in short-term medical trips (5), along with the inherent desire to volunteer in global health training opportunities suggests more osteopathic medical students will continue to engage in medical service trips abroad.
• Developing a framework for assessing the quality of the service trips has been paramount to the success of those activities (6), and in a similar form a framework for assessing the quality of medical student experiences is necessary for sustainability.
• Consistently addressing student concerns or suggestions after each osteopathic medical outreach trip had led to progressive improvement in student overall satisfaction as reported by student participants.
• Addressing student concerns or suggestions can lead to a positive impact in the overall experience of future medical outreach activities abroad most comparable to that of other well established osteopathic medical outreach programs.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. Karen Loflin in collecting the feedback from students who participated in the various International Osteopathic Medical Outreach trips at ACOM.