International MD/MBA class inspires student to volunteer in Guatemala

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Mohammed Sharief (MD/MBA '25), third from left, with classmates in front of Centro De Salud Barbara, a rural clinic in San Juan Sacatepequez, Guatemala, they visited for the MD/MBA class Health Care in Central America. Sharief was so impressed with the work being done there, he plans to return in January for a two-month rotation at the clinic.

Tulane School of Medicine graduate Mohammed Sharief (MD/MBA ’25) planned to spend his time leading up to Match Day 2026 doing audition rotations in anesthesiology at various hospitals, but an eye-opening experience in Guatemala changed that plan.

In April, Sharief traveled to Guatemala for the course Health Care in Central America, a weeklong class for students in Tulane's joint MD/MBA program that explores the complexities of healthcare delivery in Latin America. Through meetings with providers and visits to a range of medical facilities, students gain insights into the economic, social and cultural factors that impact healthcare access and quality in the region.

"It's a vastly different system than here in the United States," Sharief says. "There's no need for referrals. If you have the money, you can get surgery done next week, but not everyone is that lucky. If you don't have funds and if you don't have insurance, which not many people do, you just don't get quality care."

Patients who seek care at a public hospital, he notes, may have to wait days before seeing a doctor.

"The physicians we met who worked in government hospitals and clinics love what they do — it's why they think they were put on the planet — but they're overworked and underpaid," he says.

Seeing firsthand the challenges that health care providers in Guatemala face made an impression on Sharief, so much so that he decided to return in January to do a two-month volunteer rotation at Centro De Salud Barbara, a rural clinic where he'll be doing everything from taking vitals and conducting patient assessments to delivering babies and assisting with surgeries.

"I really love what they're doing in Guatemala, and I believe the type of work they're doing will make me a better physician," he says. "I just want to serve the patient population."

Sharief's interest in serving disadvantaged populations, in fact, was one of the reasons he decided to pursue an MBA. With increasing consolidation in the health care industry and its potential impacts on care, Sharief sought a better understanding of the business side of medicine.

"I wanted an MD and an MBA because I want to be that physician who really advocates for the patient but can also work with people on the finance side," Sharief says. "I want to bring that patient-centric perspective to the C-suite."

In the meantime, Sharief hopes to create future opportunities for Tulane School of Medicine students to do international rotations in Guatemala.

Universidad Francisco Marroquin, Tulane's partner institution in Guatemala, has an agreement with Harvard University that brings Harvard medical students to Guatemala for rotations in the university's hospital and clinics. Since April, Sharief has been talking with administrators at UFM about creating a similar program for Tulane School of Medicine.

"There currently aren't any opportunities for students to do international medicine through Tulane's School of Medicine," Sharief says. "We've talked about potentially creating this sort of program for Tulane medical students. I think there would be a lot of interest."