



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Global & Border Health

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# Global Cats

Global Health Updates from the University of Arizona  
College of Medicine- Tucson  
Office of Global and Border Health





# Congratulations to the Class of 2025 Global Health Distinction Track Graduates!

Hanan Alsakka  
Max Coffeen  
Lacey Culpepper  
Jordan Gotwalt  
Aarzo Kumar  
Jasmine Lock  
Zain Majeed  
Sabina Saeed  
Pantea Sazegar  
Marija Shahid  
Megan Taylor

## Fourth-Year Medical Student International Rotations

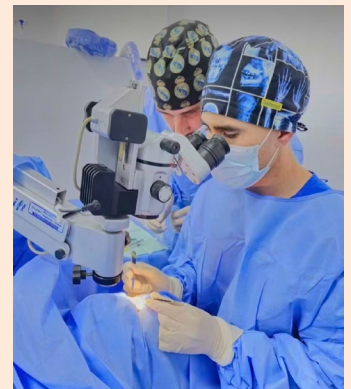
### A Global Ophthalmology Experience in Lima, Peru

Max Coffeen, MD - University of Arizona, Class of 2025

During my fourth year of medical school, I returned to Lima, Peru, to complete a clinical rotation with a cornea specialist at OftalmoSalud. This global health immersion was conducted entirely in Spanish, allowing me to strengthen both my clinical skills and language proficiency. Under supervision, I performed my first five pterygium excisions



and administered over 20 retrobulbar blocks. This hands-on experience provided invaluable surgical exposure and deepened my commitment to global ophthalmology. Following the rotation, I took an additional week to travel to Cusco and visit Machu Picchu—a meaningful cultural experience that complemented the clinical portion of my trip.



I highly recommend this rotation to medical students who are fluent in Spanish and have a strong interest in ophthalmology and global health.



## Heritage, Healthcare, and the Space Between

Sabina Saeed, MD, MPH - University of Arizona, Class of 2025

During my global health rotation at the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology in Islamabad, Pakistan, I was inspired by the dedication of the clinicians working hard to learn and care for their patients, yet struck by the realization that even one of Pakistan's most advanced hospital operated with fewer resources than some of the most under-resourced hospitals I'd seen in the U.S.

As someone raised in America but rooted in Pakistani heritage, I stood in a strange in-between. I looked like everyone, spoke the language fluently, yet still noticed the systemic gaps subtly impacting the care being given. The experience made me reflect deeply on how health equity isn't just about access to care, but about the many forces surrounding that care: finances, funding, welfare, culture, religion, language, to name a few.

What I learned was that global health isn't "over there." Too often, we approach the world with an egocentric lens, assuming we know what's best. But there is so much more to learn when we start with curiosity. It starts with the questions we ask, the stories we are willing to hear, and the humility to let those answers and experiences shape us.

## Emergency Care and Community in Simiyu, Tanzania

Jasmie Lock, MD - University of Arizona, Class of 2025

I spent four weeks at Songambele as a fourth-year medical student, returning after my first visit during my first year. From the moment I arrived, I was welcomed back into a warm, welcoming, and familiar environment that immediately put me at ease. Many aspects of this rotation left a lasting impact on me. First and foremost, was the incredible sense of community and the genuine people I met. The physicians were always eager to teach, the nurses went above and beyond to support my capstone project, and the hospital staff frequently checked in on me at our accommodation. We shared meals, watched movies together, and exchanged stories about our cultures—creating a sense of connection that extended beyond clinical work.



Clinically, I grew tremendously during my time at Songambele. I encountered a variety of disease processes that are uncommon in the U.S., which broadened and deepened my clinical knowledge. At the same time, I was able to contribute by sharing treatment strategies for conditions more commonly managed in the U.S. One of the most



valuable experiences was visiting several rural government-run dispensaries, which provide essential care to underserved communities.

I also gained hands-on experience triaging patients in the emergency department, often participating in initial assessments and life-saving interventions. This experience proved invaluable during my emergency medicine rotation at COMT months later.

Overall, my time at Songambebe was transformative—both personally and professionally. I'm incredibly grateful for the experience, and I look forward to returning one day, this time as a family physician.



### Simiyu, Tanzania

Lacey Culpepper



### Mae Sot Province, Thailand

Jordan Gotwalt, Megan Taylor



### Haryana, India

Arzoo Kumar



### Tombstone/Bisbee, Arizona

Pantea Sazegar



### San Ramon, Costa Rica

Marija Shahid





## San Ramon, Costa Rica

Zain Majid



## Kapsowar, Kenya

Hanan Alsakka



# MED 896A Global Health Intensive Course



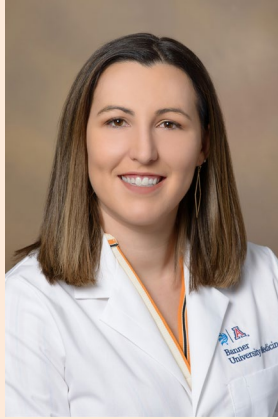
The MED 896A In-Person Global Health Intensive Course took place from April 14<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025. Learners engaged in small group discussions, interactive problem-solving scenarios, and lectures designed to prepare them for work in resource-limited settings both internationally and domestically. The course featured participation from a diverse group of interdisciplinary faculty who shared their valuable experiences and expertise.





## **Awards and Scholarships**

### **Tracy Carroll Resident Global Health Award**



Jaylee Caruso, MD



Jinx Lioi, MD

### **Ron & Karen Pust Faculty Award**



Noshene E. Ranjbar, MD

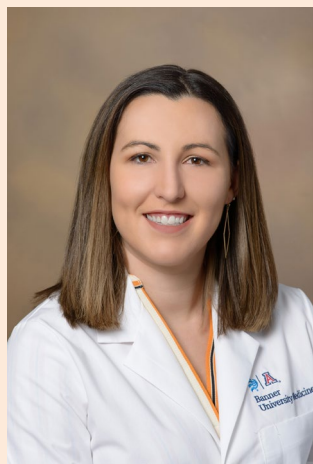
### **Nehal Shah Memorial Global Health Award**



Max Coffeen



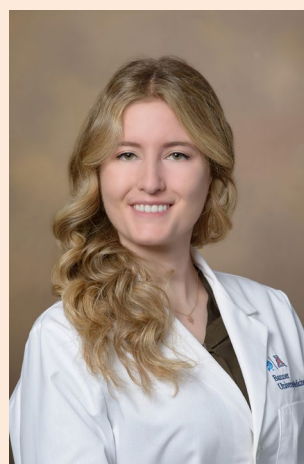
## **GME Resident Global Health Travel Scholarship Recipients**



Jaylee Caruso, MD



Jinx Lioi, MD



Hannah Emerson, MD



Amanda Goodwin, MD



Nicholas Lolli, MD



Laura Mroue, MD

## **Mulcahy Scholarship Recipient**



Max Coffeen



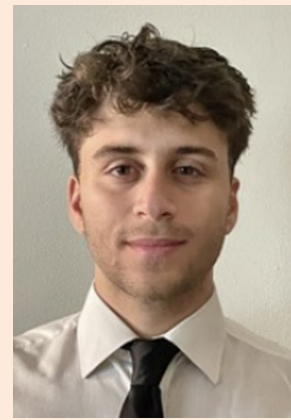
## Leverant Scholarship Recipients



Thomas Brower



Sabrina Ferrari



Alex Hitti



Kaxandra Nessi



Lily Travis

## STFM Global Health Award Recipient

Co-Director, Dr. Jerome Koleski, was recently awarded the 2025 Gabriel Smilkstein Memorial Award by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine (STFM) at the annual Spring Conference.





## Thank you to Kaimas Foundation!

The Office of Global and Border Health recently received a generous \$25,000 donation from the Kaimas Foundation to support student and resident travel for global health experiences. This contribution is one of several meaningful contributions the Foundation has made in recent years. Established in 2008, the Kaimas Foundation is committed to improving the lives of underserved populations through innovative, sustainable efforts. This funding will help medical students and residents engage in global health work abroad and in underserved communities across Arizona, gaining valuable insights into health care disparities and diverse approaches to care. The Office of Global and Border Health is grateful for the foundation's continued partnership and support!

## First-Year Medical Student International Rotations: Summer '25

### Global Experiences in Global Health

Thomas Brower, Lauren Heathcock, Esha Rajadhyaksha, Lily Travis - University of Arizona, Class of 2028



In the summer of 2025, four students from the UA College of Medicine – Tucson traveled to Trujillo, Peru to participate in the Vive Perú program and observe clinical medicine abroad. We engaged directly with physicians, community health leaders, and other healthcare providers in a broad array of specialties ranging from surgical oncology and emergency medicine to OB/GYN and ophthalmology. Beyond the hospital, we also taught English to elementary school students, and at moments, we found ourselves learning as much from them as they did from us.

This experience offered us a firsthand look at how Peruvian providers adapt their care to meet the unique needs of their communities. Often, the lack of access to healthcare resources and infrastructure demanded new approaches to care delivery. For instance, new mothers and pregnant women are mapped out on a large display of every OB/GYN's district. Physicians personally visit these women to monitor their health and their baby's well-being. This practice is put into place because of the infrastructure of the city and socioeconomic barriers that prevent women from attending clinics in-person for follow ups.

Oncologists similarly rely on community-based approaches with cancer screening to help shift the landscape of oncology treatment outcomes in a positive direction. Currently, many patients receive delayed diagnoses and present



with advanced stages of disease, which severely limits treatment options in an area where resources are already strained to the limits. Many oncologists and nurses will volunteer time in community clinics to provide affordable screening services to patients for common cancers in Peru. These same clinics will organize a number of health campaigns in the surrounding Andean highlands to both increase awareness and access to these services. This community-centric approach to medicine highlights the importance of public health in Peruvian healthcare and reveals a fundamental aspect of Peruvian culture.

Hand in hand with this, the prevalence of gastrointestinal (GI) health concerns was strikingly high in Trujillo. In conversations with local residents, we learned that access to clean water is limited, and many community members regularly eat street food. Unfortunately, this food is not always cooked or stored properly, contributing to a significant burden of GI illnesses. We also observed a high incidence of GI cancers, prompting us to reflect on what systemic changes might help prevent disease progression.

Another notable difference in healthcare delivery was the reliance on paper medical records; patients often brought their own records to appointments, and physician documentation was typically handwritten in large ledger books, with minimal use of electronic charting. While we admired many aspects of Peruvian healthcare, these observations reinforced our interest in pursuing future research and community projects aimed at reducing such barriers.

During our rotation, we took advantage of the time there to explore the stunning natural settings Peru has to offer. We visited many of Peru's incredibly diverse landscapes from the desert oasis of Huacachina and the seaside cliffs of Paracas to the snowcapped mountains of Huaraz, every corner of Peru captivated us. A few of us traveled to the mountain towns of Cascas and Salpo, which were incredibly beautiful with their scenic views, amazing agriculture, and natural landscape. The visits were also very educational, giving us insight into how the communities made use of all their resources. One unique example was using cow's blood to make a local chocolate treat as a way to help fight anemia by adding an iron-rich ingredient to their diet. Some students even made it to the historic streets of Cusco during the final days of a weeks-long Incan festival and were able to interact with locals at soccer games. From there, we embarked to Machu Picchu and the Rainbow Mountain, marveling at the awe-inspiring ruins. While these sights were nothing short of breath-taking, our favorite parts of the rotation were the Peruvian families, physicians, and medical students who welcomed us into their communities.





Overall, a strong sense of community belies more than just healthcare in Peru, it is present in Peruvian society from top to bottom. We shared delicious home-cooked meals with the host families who graciously opened their homes to us. While visiting the local communities with our translators and other students, we saw how public spaces were built to prioritize social gathering. As these communities welcomed us, it challenged our ability to speak and understand Spanish in both social and medical contexts. We are all incredibly grateful to the Vive Perú team for pairing us with interpreters who helped us develop our Spanish speaking and comprehension skills.

For any students interested in pursuing global health or learning about healthcare systems in another country, we cannot recommend Peru enough!

## Kapsowar, Kenya

Abel Harris, Saki Kazui



## Riobamba, Ecuador

McKenzie Bieg, Tyler Gore, Eliza Johnson, Emma Martinez, Cameron Mortazavi



## Raipur, India

Shreya Chandak





## Mumbai, India

Anya Chaudhry



## Bariadi, Tanzania

Sabrina Ferrari, Kaxandra Nessi, Megan Rae



## Safford, Arizona

Thea Christofferson



## Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

David Effio Vizcarra



## Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

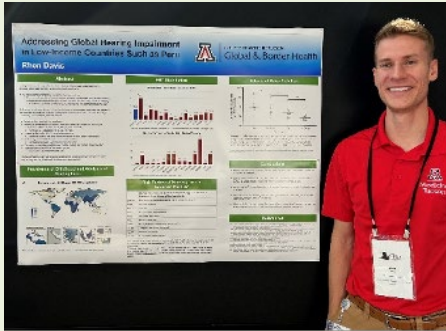
Alex Hitti, Claudia Pham



# Scholarly Projects

## Addressing Global Hearing Impairment in Low-Income Countries Such as Peru

Rhen Davis - University of Arizona, Class of 2027

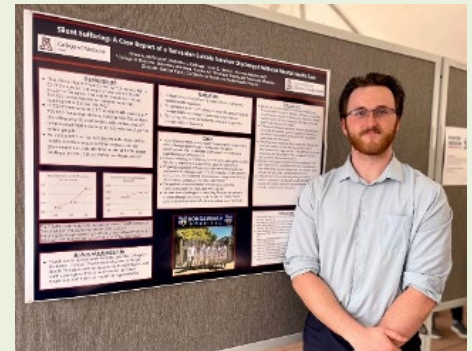


In March 2025, Class of 2027 med student and participant in the Global Health Distinction Track, Rhen Davis traveled to Pittsburgh, PA to attend the 2025 Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Conference (EHDI) at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. During this time, Rhen was not only able to learn and network, but he also presented his research poster titled, “Addressing Global Hearing Impairment in Low-Income Countries Such as Peru.” Research for his project was conducted in part while on his Global Health rotation with the Vive Peru program in Trujillo, Peru.

## Silent Suffering: A Case Report of a Tanzanian Suicide Discharged Without Mental Health Care

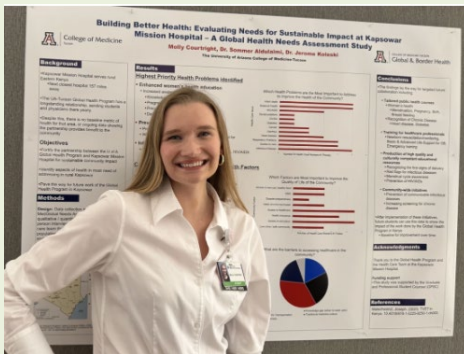
Bryce McWhorter - University of Arizona, Class of 2027

In April 2025, Class of 2027 med student and participant in the Global Health Distinction Track, Bryce McWhorter, was accepted to present his poster on “Silent Suffering: A Case Report of a Tanzanian Suicide Discharged Without Mental Health Care.” As part of the track, Bryce traveled to Tanzania in year 1 where he spent 2-weeks at the Songambele Hospital gaining field experience.



## Building Better Health: Evaluating Needs for Sustainable Impact at Kapsowar Mission Hospital

Molly Courtright - University of Arizona, Class of 2026



In April 2024, Class of 2026 med student and participant in the Global Health Distinction Track, Molly Courtright presented her poster titled “Building Better Health: Evaluating Needs for Sustainable Impact at Kapsowar Mission Hospital – A Global Health Needs Assessment Study” at the Annual Research Day hosted by the College of Medicine- Tucson. In year 1 of med school, Molly traveled to Kenya where she spent two-weeks rotating at the Kapsowar Mission Hospital gaining valuable field experience, basic knowledge, skills and learning more about the relationship between health and the social determinants of health.

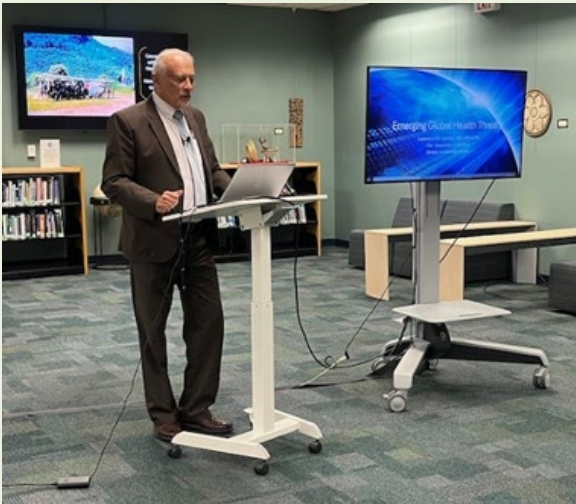


## 2nd Annual Global Health Research Day

The Office of Global & Border Health hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Global Health Research Day on Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This yearly exhibit features a series of select research posters created by students, residents, and faculty. Participants were able to showcase their global health efforts and research achievements. This event promotes global health work, creates networking opportunities within the global health community, and inspires more interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaborations.

### Keynote Speaker- Lawrence Gernon, MD, MPH&TM, FACP

Dr. Gernon brings decades of expertise at the intersection of global health, diplomacy, and emergency medicine. He currently serves as Adjunct Professor of Global Health Security with the Global and National Security Policy Institute and as an Attending Physician in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Raymond G. Murphy Medical Center. He is also an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine. A retired Senior Foreign Service Officer (Minister Counselor) with the U.S. Department of State, Dr. Gernon has held leadership roles in international and domestic public health, including serving as Deputy Health Commissioner for Virginia's Eastern Region. His work has taken him to more than 20 countries across Latin America, Africa, and Asia—including Mexico, Tanzania, Myanmar, and Thailand—where he has contributed to global health initiatives, crisis response, and capacity building in diverse and complex environments.





## Best Poster Award: Resident:

Where There Is No Blood Bank



Amanda Goodwin, MD,  
Lynn Coppola, MD, MPH

## Best Poster Award: Student:

Practices and Beliefs Surrounding Pregnancy and Post-Partum  
Family Planning in Nkololo, Tanzania



Jasmine Lock

## Best Poster Award: Overall:

Improving Access to Care in a Migrant Processing Center: Country-Wide Free Clinics Database



Lesly Diaz Chacha, BA, Victoria Rubio, BA,  
Natalia Galarza, MD



# How You Can Help!

To donate to global health, go to <https://give.uafoundation.org/com-tuc-family-community>. In the Your Gift section, for "I would like to support," choose International Health Teaching Program from the pull-down menu.