

Bangkok & Mae Sot, Thailand

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Program: Thailand International Elective: Health Sciences,
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Major: Medicine (Physician Assistant Studies MPS)

Earning the Community Engagement Badge:



During our third week in Thailand, we visited Mae Sot, a rural area near the Thailand-Myanmar border that was home to several Burmese refugees. We had the opportunity to rotate through their free clinic and work closely with the medics, who are the equivalents of PAs in that region. It was interesting to find that they had such limited resources out there—for example, in

the U.S. it's easy to order lab work, imaging, and other tests for a simple outpatient visit. However, this clinic was limited to a blood draw that required microscopy to count cells (without the use of a machine like in the U.S.) and took over an hour to receive results, an old ultrasound, and basic antibiotics and pain meds. We had to learn to work with what we had available.

I also got to see how different the living conditions were for these Burmese families compared to those in Bangkok. I felt like I was in another country (Myanmar specifically), despite still actually being in Thailand. Many people walked around barefoot with slightly disheveled clothing. Women and young girls wore "thanaka," a yellow-white facial paste made from ground bark used for cosmetic and sun protection purposes. The surrounding area was filled with homes that had rooftops made of straw and wood, but many families had walked or biked from even further away to reach this clinic. This experience being in rural Thailand was definitely a good way to witness the differences in their community compared to what I am used to in the U.S., and it taught me to be more aware of such unique lifestyles elsewhere in the world.

Transferable Skills:



Although I have always felt I was culturally sensitive, I've become even more tuned in with the struggles of underserved populations in Utah. After realizing our limited resources in Mae Sot, I wanted to take advantage of what we do have in the U.S. to benefit our patients. For example, I volunteered at CARE Fair earlier this week, an

event that provides free health screenings for uninsured patients who do not have a primary care provider. Many of them had been dealing with chronic medical conditions that obviously have been poorly monitored. Thus, I referred the majority of my patients to get established with free primary care. I've been grateful of the resources we do have here to help them.



“Thailand exposed me to underserved communities who don't have reasonable access to health resources. My goal is to continue reaching out to these populations as a physician assistant in the near future. I want to embody my program's mission by continuously lending a hand to those who need healthcare, even if I am just one person.”