

It is the end

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It has been a little over a weeks since my last day at Manos Abiertas and I must say I am tempted to fly back to Guatemala. I learned so much in my three months in Ciudad Vieja, Guatemala. My Spanish listening and speaking skills have improved leaps and bounds. I was able to learn about Guatemalan culture and the different set of challenges present in the healthcare system. I learned how to effectively communicate crossculturally and I found a passion for maternal and child health. As for problem-solving, my internship taught me how to best do so by thinking outside of the box and never giving up.

My time with Manos Abiertas has left me with a desire to work on health education and empowering patients to make their own health decision. I would love to do this when I get back to Tulane. My internship has made me aware of the power of traditional medicine for treatment. I would love to study botany more so I can learn how to best intertwine Western and traditional medicine.

For anyone thinking of volunteering with Manos Abiertas in the future, I would advise them to be helpful in any way they can. Whether that is scrubbing the floors or advertising services, look for what needs to be done and just do it. You will make the most of your time and help out as much as possible.

In Guatemala, I have found that machismo culture is present and one of the ways to best combat this is education. You can help contribute to education everywhere in whatever you do. Just take on the task and you will be amazed with the results. As a female working in the field of maternal and child health, you have a unique opportunity to educate as women about women and make them feel comfortable with the stigmatized topics.

I learned so much in my 10 weeks in Guatemala. I wouldn't trade it for anything.