

Public Health in the Andean Region: An Innovative Collaborative Study Abroad Program in Peru



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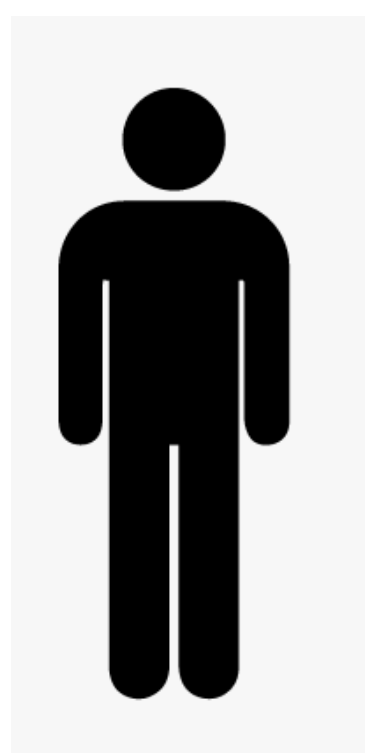
Background

This collaborative study-abroad initiative between the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC), is designed to explore Peru's health systems and to identify primarily infectious disease (ID) cases relevant to healthcare practices in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region and Florida. This initiative is significant for its potential to enhance medical students' understanding of global health systems through direct observation while introducing them to research methods.

Aim

The primary learning objectives are to develop students' ability to **compare healthcare delivery** in different settings and **cultivate research skills**.

Methods

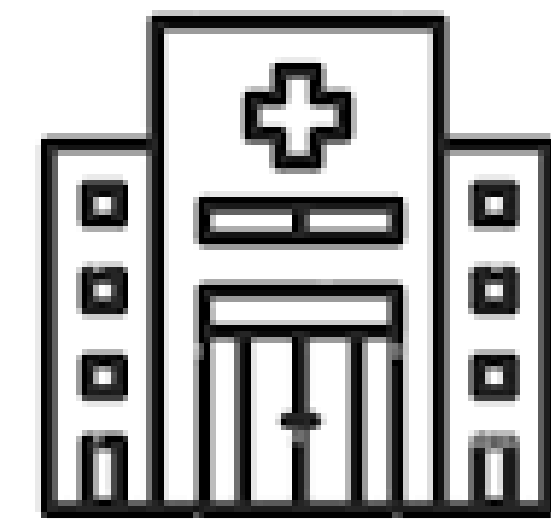


Practice-to-research elective

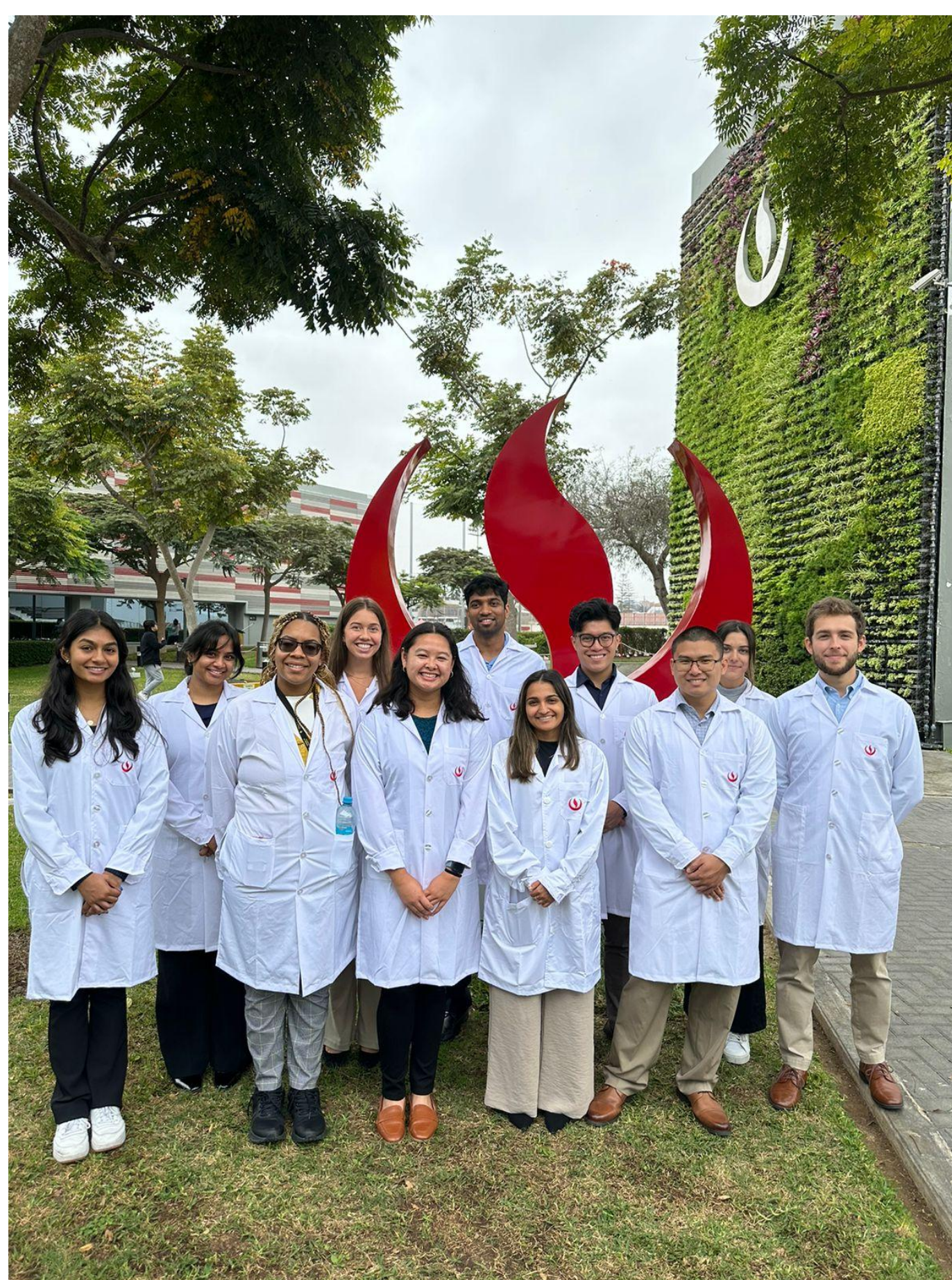
First- and second-year medical students

14 medical students across two cohorts

Dual-setting approach: public hospital & private clinic¹



Unlike typical observerships in medical education, this innovative program advances the experience by incorporating comparative analysis and research development.



By requiring students to choose a research interest and develop a presentation in abstract form, the program aligns with and builds upon established global health educational methods that emphasize experiential learning², reflective practice³, and research-based inquiry.⁴



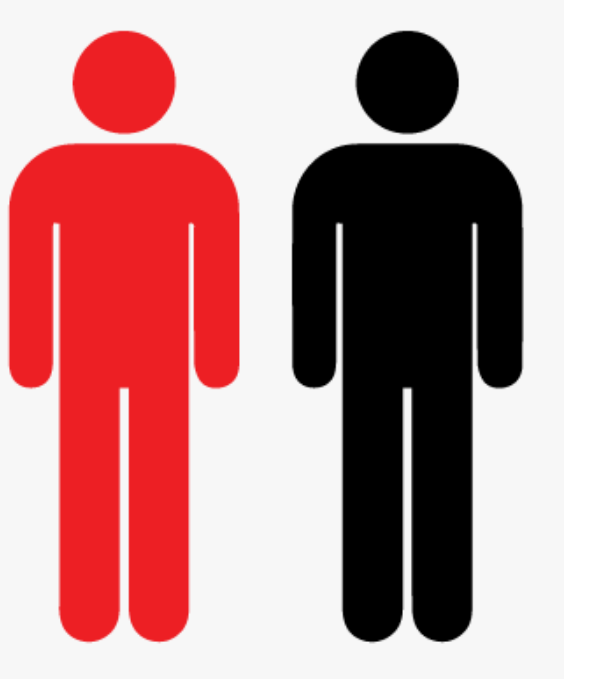
**Scan to watch a Youtube video summary
of the program**

Findings

Within ID, students successfully identified key differences and similarities in healthcare approaches within the public and private sectors in Peru.



The program enhanced their understanding of regional health challenges and **provided valuable insights into issues that may parallel those in Florida**.



In post evaluation of the course, we found that **~50% of students independently pursued a global health related trajectory** such as the Fogarty and American Medical Women's Association Global Health fellowships.

Interpretation

The program offers a scalable model for integrating health system analysis into global health education and is currently being expanded into Malta to offer medical education experiences in non-communicable diseases in a predominantly public or nationalized healthcare system.



The lessons learned from this program have broader implications for the design of study abroad programs and the role of experiential learning in medical education.

Also, research opportunities and collaborations open among faculty and students, while a new cohort of physician scientists are being trained.

References

- ¹Page 64, incorporating health systems in the medical curriculum. Thomas, P. A., Kern, D. E., Hughes, M. T., Tackett, S. A., & Chen, B. Y. (Eds.). (2022). Curriculum development for medical education: a six-step approach. JHU press.
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