Amazon Promise was truly a once in a lifetime experience. I remember feeling a little nervous and a lot excited when I arrived in Iquitos, Peru. I wasn't quite sure what to expect. But as we met the rest of the team, things seemed to just fall into place. The entire trip was incredibly organized. I was at first a bit nervous about holding clinic without an attending looking over my shoulder but after a few days, I really became comfortable diagnosing and treating patients. I saw an incredible variety of disease processes and learned how to provide medical care in a more resource-limited setting. I also learned a great deal about the Peruvian healthcare system and their beliefs on medicine and disease causation. I saw first-hand the health disparities and problems with access to medical care that many communities faced. There were times where I thought to myself how easy it would have been for me to make a trip to Target before I left to bring a few extra reading glasses or more children's vitamins with me to Peru. When you see the limited resources these people have, you really begin to appreciate how we live in such an affluent and accessible society. Between clinics, we also had ample opportunities to learn about traditional medicine and Peruvian culture. Amazon Promise employs amazingly knowledgeable translators which made our transition into the Peruvian healthcare system all the more smooth. I remember one of the Peruvian doctors approached me one afternoon and asked if we could spend time just talking so that he could improve his English and I could learn more Spanish. Everyone was incredibly nice and supportive. This program far exceeded my expectations and I would absolutely recommend it to future medical students interested in international health.

- Irene T. (September 2008)

The Amazon Promise rotation will undoubtedly be one of the highlights of my medical school career. It was an incredible learning experience on many levels, both personal and professional. From a professional standpoint, I learned to triage and manage patients with limited medical resources at my disposal. I also gained exposure to many diseases that I do not routinely see in clinics in Ann Arbor, or on the wards at the University of Michigan Hospital. I saw patients with advanced malignancies, HIV, tuberculosis, and a large variety of infectious complaints. In addition, I appreciated the opportunity that Amazon Promise provided to learn about the healthcare system in Peru. It was amazing to me to contemplate the inequalities faced by poor patients in Peru, as well as the challenges faced by all patients trying to obtain adequate healthcare in a developing country. From a personal perspective, the rotation challenged me physically, mentally, and emotionally, and I know that it will profoundly change the way that I think about medicine and about patients in the future. The experience has also motivated me to
continue to be involved in global health throughout my career.

- Laura M. (September 2008)

The Amazon Health course was everything I, as a fourth year medical student, could want in an international rotation. It was a great opportunity to use my clinical knowledge to provide much-needed medical care for impoverished people who would otherwise receive no health care. Amazon Promise, the organization that runs the clinics, was extremely well-organized. Everything proceeded remarkably smoothly, especially if one considers all the logistical difficulties that could come up in bringing a team of medical professionals with supplies to remote areas of the Amazon Jungle. I am personally very grateful for having had the privilege to be a part of this organization, and I would wholeheartedly recommend the experience to anyone considering it.

- Aazaz H. (September 2008)

Worth the Wait - Having freshly completed my most demanding medical school clerkship thus far, I hadn't dedicated as much time as I would have liked to mentally preparing myself for my trip to the Amazon. I gazed down upon the vast forest below as our flight prepared to land in Iquitos. The trees really did resemble broccoli from the air, as I had been told. "What lies beneath their branches?" I wondered. "How will these next three weeks affect me?" Never having set foot in a developing country before, I was full of excitement and uncertainties.

As the days unfolded before me, I experienced sights and people that I did not and could not have sufficiently imagined before arriving in Peru. In Belen, we witnessed disparate living conditions, with garbage strewn about beneath the homes elevated on stilts bordering the riverbanks. Lack of sanitary sewage systems abounded, and the mechanisms by which diseases could easily spread were obvious. We cared for polite and well behaved, incredibly thin children and their families in hot schoolhouse clinics. The children's smiling faces exuded excitement and pleasure in our presence, providing us with stamina during hot clinic days. Trips to a local hospital and psychiatric institution illustrated the Peruvian standard of care, a stark contrast to the clinical conditions in our own country. In the jungle, daily boat rides to remote villages sometimes resulted in celebratory musical welcome ceremonies by the villagers. Female villagers adorned us with their beautiful handmade jewelry. As students, we were given responsibility and independence as we listened to common complaints including diarrhea, parasites, rashes, visual complaints, headaches and musculoskeletal complaints, among other
Post-Trip Reflection: University of Michigan 4th Year Students Reminisce

Written by University of Michigan Medical Students
Sunday, 07 September 2008 19:00

symptoms. The sense of satisfaction of aiding the patients we saw was strong as we gathered together for dinner each night in the jungle, but we were, at the same time, fully aware that villagers required further education and access to more superior testing and treatment in many circumstances.

Prior to this trip, I'd failed to realize how precisely necessary is the aid that the Amazon Promise organization provides. Fellow students who had embarked on medical mission trips abroad through other organizations sometimes commented that the need in the community was not as profound as suspected, or they were not able to participate in the care of the patients as fully as they had desired. Thus, I had waited to participate in an international rotation until I had a sound set of clinical rotations under my belt. Never once in the Amazon did I feel unnecessary or underappreciated. My understanding of health care delivery in Peru and other developing countries improved immensely, from knowledge surrounding the Ministry of Health, public health education, and traditional medicine beliefs. Regarding my preparation, I realized that one could never be 100% prepared to enter such a unique situation. As a 4th year medical student, my trip to Peru was worth the wait. Not only did my perspectives on health care delivery deepen, but also my appreciation for my everyday life expanded. This trip will likely serve as only the first of many international experiences over the course of my career.

- Beth B. (September 2008)

It is certainly eye opening to see the health care system of another country. It makes you appreciate our system so much, even with its huge limitations. In particular, when we were in the jungle, we saw that there is no safety net for people there. If a child falls and breaks his arm, his family likely will not be able to afford a boat ride to the city to get treatment. When you see patients like that, it is very rewarding, as you know that without our presence, people really would have nowhere to go. Overall it is also just a good experience to make you appreciate life in an affluent nation. It makes you appreciate so many aspects of life here that you wouldn't otherwise; things like sewage systems, trash disposal, paved roads, etc. It's a tough trip, there's not much to do in the jungle at night, but you end up being pretty well rested.

- Sarah S. (September 2008)