

Explain why you decided to apply for the Global Grant Scholarship?

During my junior year of college, I studied abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark and spent a semester taking public health related courses. By that point, I had begun to realize that the United States is a treatment-based country; it focuses on treating individuals that are already sick rather than investing more in preventing individuals from getting sick in the first place. It is no secret that the U.S. is the country that spends the most on healthcare, yet it does not have the healthcare outcomes to show for it. That is where my interest in public health stemmed from, wanting to learn about ways in which to improve the U.S. healthcare system so that it would benefit the patients more and be more feasible. However, I also had the privilege of taking a course called Health Beyond Borders. It was essentially a global health course, and in that course we learned how the world is far from equal. For example, diseases that no longer plague the U.S. are still very prevalent in other parts of the world. Some countries still have alarmingly high child mortality rates that could be prevented with better access to healthcare, better nutrition, and clean water. That course helped me realize that while it is important to want to improve healthcare outcomes of my home country, I must not turn a blind eye to those suffering in other countries. Thus, I thought that global health was the perfect medium for me. I'd get to learn about public health measures and disease prevention that could be applicable anywhere, like my home country. Yet, I'd also learn how to work collaboratively with other countries to ensure that the health of the world as a whole is improved and that populations of lower-income and transitioning countries are not forgotten. These newfound realizations inspired me to apply for another Rotary District 5930 scholarship that allowed me to go on a 2-week global health medical service trip to Costa Rica. It was actually in the interview for that scholarship that I learned about the Global Grant Scholarship. I really enjoyed my study abroad semester and couldn't stop thinking about what a great opportunity the Global Grant Scholarship would be after hearing that it would grant me \$30,000 to study abroad for a year while working towards a graduate-level degree of my choice, as long as I could justify that my proposed area of study fell under one of Rotary's Six Areas of Focus (which are Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution, Disease Prevention and Treatment, Water and Sanitation, Maternal and Child Health, Basic Education and Literacy, and Economic and Community Development). When I heard about the Global Grant Scholarship, I was heading into my last semester of my undergraduate studies and had already been looking into doing a Master's program in Global Health anyways, so I decided to apply. Global Health encompasses so much, since there are so many factors that influence group and individual differences in health status. So, I had no problem demonstrating that Global Health related to one of the six areas of focus.

Mention the name of the degree you earned, the university you attended, and where it is located.

I earned a MSc in Global Health through the Brighton and Sussex Medical School. It is located in Brighton, England, which is found along the southern coast of England about 1.5 hours south from London.

Concisely describe what you consider to be the most significant experiences you had.

Honestly, the most significant experiences I had involved times spent with Rotarians. My host sponsor Jim was such a kind man and very much believed that I should be having experiences that I would not be able to have back at home. He is in love with steam wagons and owns a 1930 Sentinel Steam Wagon, so we went on several trips where I was the one responsible for shoveling coal to keep the engine going. We even were in a neighboring town's parade and went to a steam rally in the Sentinel. Prior to arriving in England, Jim asked me where I would like to visit in England and because I mentioned Stonehenge, he and his wife took me to Stonehenge and William Shakespeare's birthplace.

I also really enjoyed the Rotary dinners I was invited to as either a guest or speaker because it was always interesting to hear what the Rotarians were most interested in learning about me. Even though England has a very similar culture to that of the U.S., there are still so many differences, and all of the Rotarians I interacted with were older than 50, so I was always able to have really great conversations with them about all sorts of things like politics (for example one of the first questions I was always asked was my opinion on Trump and gun control). They also always gave me general life advice, travel recommendations, etc. I always enjoyed and learned so much from those conversations.

Describe how the experience impacted you and has helped you be of service to others.

My career goal is to become a physician assistant that works to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in my community in the Rio Grande Valley. My scholarship experience has contributed towards this career goal by allowing me to become a more well-rounded future healthcare provider. Global health has become crucial because the increasingly globalized nature of the world and its economies has made it easier for diseases to spread internationally. An example of this spread of international disease is the reported cases of individuals that contracted the Zika virus in the state of Texas, a region of the world that these viruses had not previously affected. Not only this, but I thought it necessary to learn about other public health threats, like antibiotic resistance and the resurgence of certain vaccine-preventable diseases, like measles, that will likely affect my future patients. I wanted to ensure that I gained a proper foundation of global health knowledge and the tools necessary to stay up-to-date on public health threats. I have also previously participated in two international medical service trips and hope to continue doing so at a higher capacity as a physician assistant in the future, so a global health background will allow me to be more aware, sensitive to, and knowledgeable about the different healthcare problems faced by the communities I hope to help. So in my particular case, my Global Grant Scholar experience will definitely help me be a better healthcare practitioner for my future patients.