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Poster Title: The Impact of Transformative Learning through a Study Abroad Experience on Nurse Practitioner Students Caring for Marginalized Population in a Developing Country

Poster Abstract: Study abroad for student nurses creates an experience unlike any other they will have both in and out of nursing school. With the recent focus on cultural competency and global health, study abroad is the perfect avenue for students to receive quality clinical time while being immersed in a particular culture (Granel et al., 2021). Not only do they learn to be nurses in different settings, with different resources, they also learn about different cultures and diseases while growing personally and professionally (Hsiao, 2021). This experience cannot be matched in the American university setting and helps the student develop a more global view (Wilkinson et al., 2015). In addition, the study abroad experience brings to light global social determinants of health and can help uncover student's biases and perspectives (Steppe, 2022). In a study by Hsiao, et. al. (2021), students also saw the benefit of study abroad experiences including gaining independence, social responsibility, international experience, increased ability to serve patients, and a rewarding life changing experience.

With all these great benefits in mind, the University of South Alabama (USA) developed a study abroad program in partnership with Grace Ministries in the Central American country of Guatemala. Grace Ministries is an American developed program and a school for the children of Guatemala. This is a haven for these children that provides a safe place, warm meals, and a great education. USA takes up to 15 students twice a year from the primary care pediatric nurse practitioner, family nurse practitioner, women's health nurse practitioner, and the doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) programs. The students gain clinical hours, and the DNP students are able to complete their Capstone Projects. During their time in Guatemala, the students are immersed in the local medical traditions by visiting a local midwife's home, providing care at the trash dump, where people live and work with their children, and did home visits for sick children. The students become engaged in the culture through a day excursion around the small town and touring the local hospital. The students hold clinic days at the school and churches in different villages that are open to the community. The students may see 400- 500 children in 3 days and 700-800 total patients in 3 days. The students are diagnosing and treating using their intuition and trained skills without relying on modern technology. This partnership between USA and Grace Ministries provides irreplaceable knowledge for the students and lifesaving care for these special children and their families. Integrating this type of experience in a nursing school creates diversity, cultural competence, and life changing experiences for each student and faculty member that attends. The students at USA shared real-life experiences through videos and focus groups that give true accounts of these life and career changing experiences.