

# NICARAGUA, November 2016 – Lisa Sienkiewicz MD, Class of 2017



Living in the United States, it's hard to appreciate something that is simply normal. The level of healthcare we are able to get in this country is unparalleled and has now become an expectation of the modern day American. For example, we expect to get an MRI the moment we have knee pain or the surgeon to immediately fix a shoulder problem that has been going on for a week. The urgency, expedience, and necessity in which Americans expect their healthcare saddens me as a provider and consumer.

Traveling to Nicaragua was extremely refreshing in that regard. First of all, the patients were very thankful for getting care and all presented with surgical concerns. They had serious orthopedic issues and required care that they would have gotten within a day in the United States. One memorable patient was a 23 year-old male laborer unable to work for the past 3 years due to a grossly mobile humeral shaft nonunion. I'll never forget the smile on his face immediately after surgery, knowing that he had a newfound hope in recovering function to his arm. This stripped-down

version of orthopedics at its roots reminded me why I pursued a career in medicine. I can't even begin to say how much it made me appreciate the luxuries of both practicing and participating in medicine in the United States.

Aside from the healthcare aspect of the trip, getting to know the Nicaraguan people was definitely a highlight. I really enjoyed learning as much as I could about their culture, politics and everyday life. Although initially afraid to go on my daily runs in a foreign country, I ventured out one day to find a Nicaraguan running group that welcomed me on their morning jog. Their warm invitation made this trip more unforgettable.

Going to Nicaragua was a meaningful trip that has impacted how I think about healthcare and will surely influence



how I practice orthopedics in the future. It has truly inspired me to be better physician. For future residents, I would highly recommend going to Nicaragua and only hope they enjoy it as much as I did.