

Second-year Medical Student, **Kimberly Herard**, presented her poster at the Southeastern Medical Scientist Symposium (SEMSS) last month in Atlanta, Georgia. SEMSS is an American Physician Scientists Association (APSA) regional meeting primarily organized and attended by MD and undergraduate students, with the goal of uniting aspiring physician scientists from schools around the southeastern United States.

As an undergraduate student, Kimberly was interested in pursuing research in areas affecting medically underserved populations, especially those affecting her native Haiti. She became interested in HIV/AIDS when a family member was diagnosed with HIV. Subsequently, Kimberly spent a semester conducting research at the Emory Vaccine Center in Atlanta, creating a database of distinct HIV viruses and their genomic data to help create viral clones.

During the summer of 2017, Kimberly was provided with an incredible opportunity to conduct research at the Ragon Institute of MIT, Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), and Harvard in Boston, Massachusetts. She presented "HIV strains exhibiting high replicative capacity are associated with increased viral evolution in BLT humanized mice" at the SEMSS conference. Her project focused on investigating how viral replicative capacity, an influence pathogenesis of HIV in Bone Marrow Liver tissue (BLT) mice, can recapitulate the human immune response against HIV-1 viral infection. At the Ragon Institute, Kimberly worked in Dr. Todd Allen's lab under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Claiborne. "Having the opportunity to continue research at the Ragon Institute of MIT, MGH, and Harvard was a wonderful experience that allowed me to continue what I started in Atlanta. I gained so much knowledge on the HIV virus, the great accomplishments being made in the research realm and also realized the amazing work still to be done," recalls Kimberly.

In her future, Kimberly plans to continue working with diseases such as HIV, focusing on patient education and helping to eliminate the negative stigma of HIV/AIDS. She hopes to frequently travel to Haiti to provide medical care and perform research that will benefit patients, while adding to the growing knowledge about HIV/AIDS.