



Perspective/Opinion

Brief Reflection, Book to Follow

By Stephen Hargarten, MD, MPH, Professor of Emergency Medicine

Dr. Hargarten is the Founding Dean of Global Health, serving in this role from 2010-2022. He is responsible for envisioning the Dr. Elaine Kohler Summer Academy of Global Health Research program and securing the longstanding funding from the Wm. Collins Kohler Foundation.

As MCW's 12th Global Health Week emerges for another year, I want to take a moment and reflect on my career and the evolution of global health at MCW. Global health experiences, both as a medical student and young physician, shaped me immeasurably:

I helped manage a twenty-year-old with severe dehydration, without any of the biomedical support that I was used to in a high resource hospital.

I witnessed weakened public health infrastructure (no water, poor housing) that spurred me on to acquire additional skills and knowledge by pursuing an additional degree in Public Health so I could fully understand the social determinants of health and identify solutions.

These experiences and many others helped to shape me to be a competent bedside physician. I honed my physical diagnosis skills, which carried me throughout my emergency medicine career. I also cultivated my broader interest in going upstream and finding ways to help make our communities healthy and safe for everyone

But my experiences did more. They made me more compassionate, more caring. I literally sat next to the patient and their family members at the bedside, drawing out a history, using all my artful skills of listening, palpating, smelling, observing to arrive at a diagnosis. No testing, no biomedical labs or machines were available in these resource-challenged places of care.

I am convinced that all of our students at MCW benefit from being placed “outside” the comfort zone of Wauwatosa, Wausau, or Green Bay, as I was when I ventured to Nicaragua, to Thailand, and to Panama. All of us can become global citizens of our delicate planet by

experiencing the oftentimes stark inequalities that exist in communities and neighborhoods both here and abroad.

What continues to excite me about the future here at MCW is that our global health educational and research activities continue to grow and, thus, influence another generation of physician leaders, who by virtue of their experience, are growing with **character** and compassion, influencing their **competency** and **caring** as future physician leaders.

Recent quotes from our campus learners give me joy for our future:

"I heard tales of such deep dedication to humanity and to the field of medicine/surgery even during times of chaos and conflict that I could not be anything but inspired."

"Teamwork, adaptability, tolerance, empathy, kindness, modesty, resilience, hard work, thrive, etc. were constant during my work with the team"

" Moreover, I am certain I have been impacted in more ways than I can truly describe. I know that as a physician and even more so as a human being I have been undeniably transformed."

"Finally, it has reminded me that even when language barriers exist, human compassion is a universal language that can help put our patients at ease."

This brief reflection of mine is from a member of MCW's Class of 1975. I dedicate it to our medical students and residents, to our graduate students and our pharmacy students and to our faculty, who are going to make a difference in health and safety----from neighborhoods to nations....

Dr. Hargarten also served as the Director of the Global Health Pathway, Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, and Director of the Comprehensive Injury Center. He continues to mentor students, residents, and faculty and provides advising in global health programming and injury research and policy.