The goal of the Department of Medical Humanities Fellowship program is to stimulate interest in ethical, cultural, aesthetic, and social dimensions of health, disease, and healing by inviting 1st year medical students to develop and submit original proposals relating to humanities and medicine. Students may work on projects in North Carolina, or use the fellowship as an opportunity to do a project elsewhere in the United States or abroad. Fellowships are awarded on a competitive basis. Students have the summer between their 1st and 2nd year to complete the project. At the conclusion of their work, fellows submit a paper, or other appropriate end product, and give a public presentation.

The Department of Medical Humanities is in its second year of sponsoring this fellowship program. Last year we awarded fellowships to Rebecca Keener and Joshua McKinnon for their joint project “Native Views of Illness Among the Cabarees of Costa Rica.”

We plan to share the results of each fellow’s project this coming Fall 2008.

Victoria Elliot
“The Role of the Pastor in Rural Honduras”

Victoria plans to travel to Honduras to research different aspects of the pastor’s (jefe de iglesia) role in rural Honduras. She hopes to learn from the pastors’ perspectives, the role they play in rural medicine, and find out more about their unique practices and methods, and discover how formally trained health-care providers view pastors. Victoria is also interested in learning about the beliefs of Honduras women surrounding pregnancy and delivery. By an inquiring historical observation, she hopes to gather information that will help her better understand Hispanic patients’ beliefs and biases. Victoria will focus her research on the towns of Comayagua, Olancho, La Esperanza, and Yoro, Honduras.

Senthuram Ravindran
“Advance Care Planning North Carolina 2008”

He proposes to create a new video an advance directive for use with patients, future (students) and current health care professionals. He will present this information in a manner that will appeal to viewers’ emotions, as well as provide concrete information about advance care planning and the three advance directive classes now available in North Carolina. Living Well, Health Care Power of Attorney, and Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment (also known as MST). The video will introduce, briefly explain, and provide clear, up-to-date information on these choices.

Oussama Saleh
“Traditional Healers in the Bolivian Valley, Lemonon: Practices and Beliefs”

Oussama proposes to research the long history of the use of balance arts (medical traditions “Arche Doctor”), or traditional healers for physical ailments in the Bolivian Valley of Lemonoh. He will study his observations and documentation of these leaders and their practices appear in the literature, so Oussama hopes to research, document, and assess traditional medical practices of the Bolivian arts in a cultural context.

Ying Zhang

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in females in the U.S., and is destined to increase in developing Asia and African Countries. Ying plans to focus her research on the towns of Dangou, Shaining, and Rongnan, China and Greenville, North Carolina. She hopes to learn more about the cultural/societal effects on breast cancer reporting, illness perception, treatment choices, and preventive strategies employed by Chinese women and compare and contrast cultural factors that influence the way different American females deals with breast cancer as compared to the patients in China.