The goal of the Department of Medical Humanities Summer Fellowship program is to stimulate interest in ethical, cultural, aesthetic, and social dimensions of health, disease, and healing by inviting first year medical students to develop and submit original proposals relating to humanities and medicine. Students may work on projects in North Carolina, or they may use the Fellowship as an opportunity to do a project elsewhere in the United States or abroad. Proposals are awarded on a competitive basis. Student Fellows have the summer between their first and second year to develop and complete their Fellowship. At the conclusion of their projects, Fellows submit a paper, or other appropriate artifact, and give a public presentation. The Department of Medical Humanities is pleased to be offering this Fellowship in 2010 in collaboration with the Brody Summer Research Scholars Program and Dr. David Musick’s grant, “Curriculum Development in Spirituality & Medicine.”

Past Summer Fellowship recipients include:
- Rebecca Keener and Joshua McKinnon for their joint project, “Native Views of Illness Among the Cabecarves of Costa Rica.” (2007)
- Victoria Elliot, “The Role of the Partera in Rural Honduras.” (2008)
- Demtra Ansah, “Coping with Sickle Cell Disease as a Ghanaian Adolescent.” (2009)

The Impact of Hygienic Skin Infections in Burma (Myanmar)
Kay Khine will study the impact of hygiene-related skin infections in two socioeconomic groups in Burma (Myanmar). Although not life-threatening, this epidemic impacts the daily life of Burmese of both genders, and all ages and socioeconomic status. One of the poorest countries in the world, Burma (Myanmar) is located in Southeast Asia, is slightly smaller than the size of Texas, and is home to about 48 million Burmese. Kay’s goal is to explore the medical and social dimensions of skin infections that affect Burmese citizens and to determine differences in perception between the two social classes.

Evaluating Autism in Eastern North Carolina
Karen Dieselman will be looking at the family life, community and culture of families living with a diagnosed autistic child in eastern North Carolina. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of developmental disabilities that affects communication, behavior, and social interactions. It affects all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups and occurs four times more often in boys than in girls. It is estimated that 1 in every 110 children in the United States is diagnosed with ASD.

Through interviews with the parents of autistic children, Karen hopes to understand how the children were diagnosed, how the family responded, and if the family found or created a support network with other families of autism in eastern North Carolina.

Living with and Amongst HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia:
The Effect of Individual Spirituality and the Response of the Religious Community
Spirituality in healthcare has become an important area of research as physicians are finding that it may play an important role in an individual’s health. Proponents of the integration of religion and spirituality in the clinical setting believe that spirituality affects the patient’s identity, coping mechanisms, and influences their decisions about medical management.

Ethiopia is among the world’s poorest countries, and not unlike many other countries in Africa is struggling with HIV/AIDS. This disease affects all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, and spirituality. The latter often influences how individuals view and seek treatment for the disease. This, in turn, may affect their recovery based on their belief in the healing of a higher power or simply in their belief about healthcare practices in general. Religious beliefs may also influence the prevention of the disease.

Ashley Mabina and Nicole Jacobs will be traveling to Ethiopia to further explore the correlation between patients’ spirituality/religion and how these belief systems may impact the disease process among patients with HIV/AIDS. They will work in a rural clinic in Debre Zeit for six weeks. Ashley and Nicole will interview adults living with HIV/AIDS, using a series of questions that will explore the individual’s personal journey with the disease and how they view it in the context of their spirituality, as well as how different religious communities view HIV/AIDS.