

Small trips, big impact

Need for medical care in communities abroad keeps integrative pediatrician giving back

By Jon Bell
For The Scribe

Sure, when she was on a weeklong voluntary medical trip this past summer to provide health care for children and adults in Santa Maria de Jesus, Guatemala, **Anandhi Mandi, MD**, was working long, 12-hour days. And yes, she had to have someone cover for

her at her Hillsboro clinic, **Dr. Mandi's Integrative Pediatrics**, while she was gone. And maybe the food wasn't all that great where she was.

But Mandi wouldn't have traded it for anything—and she can't wait to go back.

"I would go four times a year if I could," she said. "There's no business people telling you what to do, no electronic health records. It's just pure medicine."

Mandi, a native of India who completed her pediatric residency at St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago before landing in Oregon in 2000, takes a somewhat singular approach to medicine to begin with. She is one of only a handful of integrative pediatric physicians in the metro region, an approach she refined through a renowned fellowship in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona. Rather



Anandhi Mandi, MD, travels to developing countries, providing volunteer care to children and adults. "What I'm doing right now, I hope to do this forever," she said.

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than seeing 20 patients a day, Mandi usually sees around seven, and she said her approach incorporates "different modalities" that focus on health maintenance and disease prevention.

"This is a different way of doing medicine," she said. "It's so wholesome, but it's also evidence-based, so there's a lovely balance."

Mandi had always wanted to do some overseas work, but she had to wait until the time and situation were right. One patient of hers who has 14 children—biological and adopted—had been asking Mandi for a few years to do mission work in Haiti. Mandi eventually was able to and went to the country through Duke University and its partner organization Family Health Ministries. While there, she helped treat people for diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases, hypertension and other conditions. She's since made three trips to the country altogether, including one trip that found her 20-year-old daughter and some of her friends, who attend Emory University, accompanying her.

Mandi's first weeklong trip to Guatemala came in August, when she traveled to the Central American country with an Arlington, Wash., nonprofit called The Chance to Dream, which also organized Mandi's other two trips to Haiti. The organization partners with several communities in Guatemala to help make middle and high school education

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Alliance connects students, advances integrative medicine

By John Rumler
For The Scribe

Founded in fall 2009, the **Student Alliance for Integrative Medicine (SAIM)** is a Portland nonprofit comprised of health care students from Oregon Health & Science University, the University of Western States, Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, the National College of Natural Medicine and Pacific University.

SAIM is the student accompaniment to the Oregon Collaborative for Integrative Medicine, a nonprofit (formed by the same educational institutions named above) that strives to promote integrated health solutions through education, research, interdisciplinary collaboration and patient care. Funded by a NIH grant in 2003, OCIM was formally established as the Oregon Collaborative for Complementary & Alternative Medicine.

The executive director of OCIM since 2008, **Samantha Simmons, MPH**, has

provided oversight and support for SAIM since it was founded. "SAIM students are learning together and they will be ultimately practicing together and are uniquely suited to provide the kind of health care that mirrors patient demand, promotes the Triple Aim and reduces the primary care shortage," she said.

SAIM's main objective is to connect students and to advance integrative medicine by creating a space where medical students can share the approaches to medicine being utilized by colleagues from their respective schools. It also provides students with opportunities to begin networking and learning to speak each other's language.

Being located in Portland is strategically important to SAIM. Home to no less than three nationally recognized naturopathic learning institutions, NCM, OCOM and UWS, Portland has long been a vanguard in the mainstreaming of natural medicine. Its leadership is now even more secure: Earlier this year, OCIM, in partnership with the Academy of Integrative

Health & Medicine, created the first formally accredited inter-professional advanced training in the nation, a two-year Inter-professional Fellowship in Integrative Health and Medicine that will begin in February 2016.

OCIM and SAIM are well known nationally and internationally, Simmons said, and often looked to as role models for integrative health and medicine embedded in health care. "People may not realize that Portland is the only city in the country to house allopathic, naturopathic, chiropractic and Chinese medicine schools. We have a history of more than 25 years of collaborative research, education, patient care and advocacy."

Due to an unusually high turnover caused by graduations, SAIM's executive board is currently without a vice president, secretary and treasurer; however, **President Elliot Taxman** said the group is hosting elections in December. Taxman, who is on track to graduate from the NCM with an ND and MS in integrative medicine in 2017, said SAIM is currently planning one of largest events, the International Integrative Medicine Day, referred to as "IM day."

The event, which will be held at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry on Jan. 30, consists of panel discussions featuring practitioner speakers from multiple modalities; an intercollegiate scholarship competition, sponsored by Bob's Red Mill; and an awards ceremony/social program featuring a live band.

The scholarship competition is often a speech contest or a student panel discussion addressing a specific topic, with all finalists receiving a \$4,000 scholarship. Topics in recent years have included autoimmune disease, inter-professional communication, mindfulness and pediatrics.

SAIM also facilitates social interaction and interdisciplinary learning each term as medical students from OHSU, NCM,



OCOM, PU and UWS visit each other's schools and present a one-hour lecture on a current topic.

Although it is temporarily on hold as new officer positions are filled, SAIM's quarterly newsletter provides a platform for an information exchange where medical students can both teach and learn about the new and different approaches to medicine being utilized by their colleagues. Each issue consists of student-written articles, news of educational opportunities, scholarships, jobs, internships, integrative medicine events, and local, national and international research updates.

SAIM's membership is difficult to estimate, Taxman explains. "All students are considered members, and membership at the different chapters varies widely from year to year as students graduate." An estimated 50 to 75 individuals are core members, and about 15 people are involved on the SAIM executive board.

Past President Andrea Lane said she joined SAIM because of her passion for integrative medicine and her desire to learn more about the benefits of integrative care. "It seemed natural for me to become a part of SAIM as one of my best friends is an MD, and she and I began talking more and more about the benefits of integrative care. While it was challenging for me to balance the group with my school and personal life, it was ultimately very rewarding."

Further, Lane said SAIM provides a pathway to its members to meet a wide range of other students and practitioners in the regional health care community, to become familiar with other treatment modalities and to gain new skills.

"I truly believe that the integrative care model is the best solution for both patients and practitioners as it allows us to pool our resources and knowledge in order to provide what is best for each particular patient," she said. •

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possible for Guatemalan youth. Many children in the country only have access to education through the sixth grade. After that, they end up caring for their younger siblings while their parents work or find ways to make money themselves.

Mandi said she volunteered with the group to provide much-needed basic medical care to children and adults. The team traveled in a small van and usually set up a makeshift clinic of sorts in schools in different villages. People came from near and far—some from three-hour walks away—seeking treatment for everything from upper respiratory infections to fatigue and body aches.

In addition to paying for her airfare, Mandi brought all her own medical supplies, including over-the-counter drugs and some antibiotics. Many children start drinking soda early on, so dental hygiene is a big challenge as well. Mandi said the team also stuffed bags with washcloths, dental supplies, pain relievers, vitamins and other goods to hand out to more than 700 people. Reading glasses from the Dollar Tree also go a long way.

"Elderly women in Guatemala make their living with doing beadwork, sewing and handicrafts," Mandi said, "(so) they truly appreciated the \$1 glasses we gave them. It's very heartwarming."

After five days of treating patients, the team had a day or so at the end of the trip for a spot of vacation.

"You really work hard, but it's a beautiful place. It's like a paradise city," Mandi said.

Participating in one of the trips to Guatemala costs an average of about \$1,000, plus airfare, Mandi said. But she enjoys it so much that she doesn't mind the self-funded aspect of it at all. She's also lucky, she said, that she has a generous physician who can cover for her while she's gone, but the nice thing is that her trips are short.

"With some groups on volunteer trips you can be gone for 50 or 60 days," she said. "These are nice because they're just weeklong trips. Most people think they're not ready to do something like this, but once you do, you get the bug."

Mandi has indeed gotten the bug. She'll be heading back to Guatemala in January and will be off to Ecuador next summer.

"What I'm doing right now, I hope to do this forever," she said. •

Mandi also hopes other physicians might be interested in giving it a go as well.

To learn more, contact Mandi at info@drmandipediatics.com.

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