

San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala

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This past summer I traveled for six weeks in Guatemala. Part of this time was spent volunteering with a medical mission based in the town of San Lucas Toliman on Lake Atitlan. Our diverse team was made up of an internist, medical students, workers in public health and infectious disease, and other interested volunteers. A typical day started with a pick-up ride to a nearby finca, or plantation, where we set up the clinic by dividing available space into intake, consult and pharmacy areas. Students took a history from the patient, and then presented the patient's case to the doctor. After examination, advice and/or drugs were dispensed. Many patients visited us with complaints of GI distress caused by chronic parasite infections, chronic cough caused by infection and cooking over open wood fires without ventilation, and skin problems, but a wide variety of illness and congenital abnormalities were seen.