

Jon Gilbert Fox



From the U.S. to Venezuela and back again: Joseph Graterol's background prepared him well to serve diverse populations as a medical student and, eventually, as a physician.

JOSEPH GRATEROL

class of 2015

“What a way to be reminded of the reasons I decided to embark on a career in medicine in the first place.”

A **S A CHILD IN VENEZUELA**, Joseph Graterol ('15) would shadow his physician uncles as they treated patients. Before long, he was determined to become a doctor himself. “Seeing so much need firsthand, I really enjoyed the idea of being able to help people through science,” he says.

Graterol was born in the U.S. to Venezuelan parents. His family relocated from Ithaca, N.Y., to Venezuela when Graterol was nine years old. He returned to the U.S. after high school to attend Cornell University. Now a third-year student at Geisel, Graterol is taking advantage of his past experiences—and his fluency in Spanish—to get as much as possible out of his time at Geisel.

As an Urban Health Scholar, Graterol has furthered his interest in working with underserved populations. The Urban Health Scholar program involves activities such as taking part in health fairs and learning about the challenges associated with treating patients in urban areas. Graterol has also helped to lead a medical Spanish program in which medical students pick up the language skills they need to work with Spanish-speaking patients.

Graterol had the chance to put both his language skills and his growing medical knowledge to use the summer after his first year at Geisel, when he spent time working at a migrant shelter in Mexico. He helped care for people who had traveled from distant locations to find work and become ill or sustained injuries along the way. For many patients, all he could offer was the ability to talk to them and make them as comfortable as possible, but that turned out to be more

helpful than he expected. “Just being able to speak with them, more than any clinical thing I could have done, was huge,” Graterol says.

One patient in particular stands out in his mind. An elderly woman was brought to the shelter with wounds on her ankles. Graterol tended to her daily and tried to talk with her, although he was never sure that she knew who he was. Then, on his last day at the shelter, another medical provider told Graterol that the woman had asked if Graterol would be caring for her that day. “*Tiene buenas manos el muchacho; me ha curado los pies*,” the woman had said: “The young man has good hands; he cured my feet.” When Graterol met with her later that day, she perked up and repeated the praise to him.

The encounter meant a lot to Graterol. “What a way to be reminded of the reasons I decided to embark on a career in medicine in the first place,” he says.

SOPHIA SHEFNER

ON THE WEB



TO SEE MORE STORIES ABOUT STUDENTS AT GEISEL, VISIT 32HOURS.DARTMOUTH.EDU