Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

The Cumberland Medical internship is composed of three sites in the Cumberland area of Tennessee: Partners for Healing in Tullahoma, Volunteers in Medicine in Winchester, and Beersheba Medical Clinic in Beersheba Springs. Each clinic is a little unique and has different responsibilities. At Partners for Healing we helped with some fundraising tasks, administrative tasks such as scanning and faxing for the front desk, and some shadowing. A couple of projects we worked on were getting some older files into the electronic system and reaching out to other doctors such as specialists in the area to ask them to partner with the clinic and assist with their mission to bring free medical care to those in need. The Volunteers in Medicine clinic gave us the tasks of basically whatever needed to be done, and whatever we could assist with, because they do not have a lot of help. On a normal day, there would not be any doctors or medical professionals at the clinic, so we would do things such as check blood pressure and sugar and refill medications if needed. When a doctor came to see patients, we would help with patient check-in and taking vitals, filling prescriptions, and shadowing. Our big project that we completed at this clinic was organizing their large array of medications and creating an online catalog so it is easier to search and find what we have in the clinic. At the Beersheba clinic we were given the tasks of filing and retrieving patient charts, sometimes helping with vitals, filling prescriptions, and shadowing. Our projects at this clinic included adding an A1C chart to patients that were diabetic, cleaning the garden, and organizing the medicine cabinet.
During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

Our projects that we worked on at each clinic will hopefully help the patients and help the clinics run much more smoothly. The medicine cabinet catalog at Volunteers in Medicine will hopefully make the process of filling prescriptions and searching for what we have there much easier! The addition of the A1C charts at Beersheba will take less time now that they have a specific chart for this instead of rummaging through the whole file for the information. And at Partners for Healing, we haven't heard from the doctors we reached out to yet, but I hope that we will have some great responses! Also we were a great help to the fundraising tasks, the clinic is getting ready for a really big fundraiser, Healing on the Heal, and there was a ton of work to be done with that! I have definitely grown so much with my people and communication skills, and also from shadowing bedside manner skills. I have learned a lot about spreadsheets through our prescription catalog and other organizational work we did. I have also learned a lot from shadowing and filling prescriptions, such as learning some of the medication names and what they are often prescribed for, as well as how to ask the patient the right questions to figure out how to help them.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

At the Volunteers in Medicine clinic, where we created the online medication catalog, there was some resistance from some of the volunteers that sometimes come and help fill prescriptions. They had some concerns with that it may slow them down, and that they already knew where everything was and may not necessarily need it. We talked to them and showed them how to use it to help them get adjusted to it. We also implemented a notebook, so they can document who they gave the medication to and how much was given. Then someone can deduct it from the catalog later when there is time. We told them that this was important because it is helpful to know how much of everything there is there and if we don't have it, they don't have to look for it.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

There were three of us in this internship, so we really had to work together to fix a set schedule for all of us and all of the clinics, which was a little challenging. We also had to come up with these projects to try to help make the clinics better.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

This internship has made me more excited to work in the healthcare field! My favorite part was the shadowing, and it was all so exciting. Some of the nurse practitioners and doctors would discuss with me what their thoughts were according to test results and talking with the patients, and they let me know their thought processes with how they planned to move forward.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons’ perspectives?

The clinics we worked with were for people of low-income and without insurance. Most of the patients that came into the clinic were of different backgrounds and had to worry about the cost, and were not able to afford basic medical care, medications, or intensive medical care. We have to just be respectful of that fact and really try to work a way around it to help them in whatever way they can.
Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for providing this opportunity! It was an amazing experience, has taught me so much about compassion, innovation, and medical knowledge! I am excited about my future career directions and am glad for this internship to help me reinforce those.