Dear Committee Members,

For the past four years, The University of Wyoming School of Nursing and College of Health Sciences has partnered with a non-profit organization (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) that provides medical services in rural Honduras twice a year. These medical brigades are designed to bring supplies and assess patients with a variety of illnesses, both acute and chronic, in an acute care setting. Last fall (November 2010), the UW School of Pharmacy took part in the brigade visit. This summer (July 2011), pharmacy students (the anticipated researchers) will once again join other students and faculty from various departments on another brigade visit. During this trip, part of the goal is to review the ethical implications that medical brigades encounter when delivering health care to developing countries. We, the researchers, will focus on three main ethical principles: autonomy, beneficence, and nonmaleficence involving patient care.

Proposed Research Question:

In their continuing effort to help the rural areas of a developing country, the UW medical team has experienced thoughts on the ethical areas ongoing with each visit. This poses many questions, but the intended research would like to focus on one area that holds many subsets. Therefore, the question proposed is as follows:

- When trying to help an area like Honduras, what ethical differences arise between our (Western) ideas of health care with that of the local residents regarding short-term medical missions?

In asking this question, we would like to know specifically the perspectives between the volunteer medical providers and the local patients regarding the ethical nature of these short-term visits, including thoughts on autonomy, beneficence, and nonmaleficence. Also, because our UW medical brigades in Agua Salada are well established with the locals, emphasis will lie with medications, patient self-
monitoring and follow-up care. Some focus will be placed on chronic conditions (i.e., Hypertension, arthritis, etc.) so we can gather perspectives on what the patients diagnosed with these conditions are doing in the months between brigade visits. In addition to the question of treating chronic care, the perspective of the local Honduran consumers of the medical services is unclear. They partake regularly in the clinical services offered, however, their purpose for being there may not be medical in nature; there may be other entertainment or social aspects to their participation and it is believed that this deserves further investigation as well.

**Proposed Methodology:**

To answer the proposed research question as well as many others, surveys and/or structured interviews would be utilized to indentify ethical themes from volunteers (new and long-term) and Shoulder-to-Shoulder employees both Honduran and American. Additionally, data collection and interviews with patients, both new and repeat, would be conducted. A dedicated translator will be obtained to aid in the interview(s) conductance and to culturally translate with as much detail as possible. Careful attention will be given to training the translator to ask the questions and report answers appropriately so that accurate data can be collected.

**Proposed Impact/Conclusion:**

Is providing care beneficial both medically and ethically in these situations? This question, along with others will certainly arise regarding how to improve the care given and definitely should be addressed in future research. Additionally, this is of great concern for the UW volunteers because medical missions are becoming a progressively more popular method of providing international medical support to developing areas. It is our hope that the proposed research be funded and that it can and will provide important ethical guidance for the care that is given during future missions.

Sincerely,