The UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital in conjunction with the UCLA Program in Global Health the NGO Partners for Pediatric Progress has established strong relationships with the medical community in the Amazon region of northern Peru. The city of Iquitos is encircled by rivers and rainforest and is the world’s largest city that has no roads connecting it to the outside world – Iquitos can only be reached by airplane or boat. Iquitos is also the starting point for many tourists to explore the Peruvian Amazon. If it does not conflict with the dates of your rotation, during your trip you can explore the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, the biggest government-protected natural area in South America’s floodable Amazonia and one of the best places to see animals in the wild.

Most of the community, patients, nurses, and doctors will speak Spanish and will conduct rounds, teaching, and patient care in Spanish. It is recommended that your Spanish be at intermediate to advanced intermediate level. A good measure is that if you are able to see a Spanish-speaking patient here in Los Angeles and perform a full history, physical, and provide treatment plan without use of a translator then you have sufficient Spanish for this experience.

There are various options for your experience in Iquitos, including inpatient medicine at the Hospital Regional de Loreto through general pediatrics wards, PICU, or adult infectious disease wards; as well as outpatient clinical experience at the Belén clinic which can include outreach trips into extremely under-resourced areas of the Amazon.

The inpatient experience is at the Hospital Regional de Loreto. This is government’s Regional Hospital and main public referral hospital for all of the Peruvian Amazon. The hospital serves over a million residents in the city and surrounding rural communities of the Amazon basin. Some of the patients have traveled for over two weeks by boat to reach medical attention and this is the main public referral hospital for all of the Peruvian Amazon. Areas where UCLA residents and medical students have rotated with good experiences include the Pediatric Ward, PICU, Adult Infectious Diseases Ward, and the Adult Internal Medicine Ward. Consider asking to participate in other areas, including the emergency room or surgical areas, depending on your interests. Residents and medical students work alongside their Peruvian counterparts from the Universidad Nacional de la Amazona Peruana and are supervised by attending faculty members in pediatrics, primary care medicine and adult infectious diseases. There are daily pediatric teaching conferences and the medical community in Iquitos is eager to share their knowledge of tropical infections and exchange information on how treatment differs in settings with different resources.
The outpatient experience is at the Belén clinic is located in lower Belén. Although we do not collaborate with them, the Gesundheit Institute, provides a nice introduction to the Belén area, its population and needs: http://patchadams.org/belen-project. At the Belén Clinic you will see patients alongside the clinic doctors who will help guide you in obtaining history, physical exam skills, making diagnosis, and providing treatment in this under-resourced community. Commonly seem illnesses include respiratory illnesses, diarrhea, parasite infections, malaria, and dengue fever. While at the Belén Clinic there may be opportunities to see patients in rural health centers “up river” traveling with a primary care physician and a public health nurse. Some of the most frequently seen diagnoses include pneumonia, diarrhea and dehydration, tuberculosis, dengue fever, malaria, HIV/AIDS, trauma, seizures, meningitis, snake bites, burns and leptospirosis.

Application Details: Maximum residents to be accommodated is 3 at one time but open to residents through-out the year. Fluent Spanish required. Approximate expenses $2000. Mentor in Iquitos is Dr Martin Casapia. Hospital is Hospital Regional de Loreto (Loreto Regional Hospital) Av 28 de Julio s/n, Punchana, Iquitos, Peru.