

India's Public Health

Over the month of August this year, I was fortunate to visit India in the company of two other students for two weeks. This tour was fueled by my curiosity in taking up new perspectives on how global health concerns are navigated in other countries. I was greatly motivated to use my time there to mold my career with different tactics employed in a different environment. India was an excellent choice as it is a culturally remarkable destination that boasts a population of over one billion citizens. I was very eager to learn how a country that big manages to disseminate healthcare services to hundreds of millions of people. On a cultural level, it was a learning experience from day one and by the time I left the country, I was well equipped with a grasp of the Hindi language, just about enough to get around. Interacting with different people challenged my points of view and I am honored to have had such an enriching experience.

We were mostly stationed in the capital city, New Delhi. It was interesting to be part of a public education seminar on HIV/AIDS aimed at spreading awareness of the virus to long distance truck drivers. I found this seminar particularly relevant given the high-risk nature of their occupation. It was a clear preventive measure that anticipated the rise of HIV/AIDS cases and curbed them before it was too late. This I learned is a valuable healthcare tool that helps to deal with diseases effectively. Later on in our stay, we worked with canSupport, an organization that provides palliative care for cancer patients. It was an involving activity that saw us tag along care providers as they visited cancer patients. I admired the wholesome counseling that was also extended to the patients' families.

One striking similarity with the US I observed was drug addiction issues. India has set up drug addiction centers for juveniles and adults. It was exciting to share moments with recovering addicts, and to behold their tremendous progress. The system equips the juveniles with a trade as well as offer counseling while the adults are mainly put on medication. It dawned on me that I had underestimated the issue of drug addiction and was disturbed by its universal impact. We also got an opportunity to work with ER physicians and pulmonologists. They explained how they often felt overwhelmed by the surplus Indian population due to insufficient resources, both physical and human. Other than healthcare, we learned about the 'Scavengers', women whose lives were transformed by Bideshwar Pathak through education on sanitation.

My two weeks stay were thoroughly informative and impactful. They helped me appreciate the importance of improving healthcare systems. Seeing how universal healthcare concerns are, I was

challenged to broaden my understanding and perspective of healthcare. This will give me perspective that will result in radical solutions that serve the world at large. I became aware of how lacking healthcare resources are and the need to make them much more available and accessible to everyone. Having a large population should not be the reason that patients do not get quality healthcare. Culturally, I was able to experience diversity and appreciate it as part of healthcare.