



Student *Spotlight*

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Tell us a little about yourself!

I am from Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Telangana, India. I have a bachelor's degree in Dental Sciences (BDS). Following graduation, I apprenticed under a maxillo-facial surgeon for a couple of years to increase confidence in my work. In addition, it was then I realized I wanted to do more than just run a dental practice. I wanted to make a difference in society by reaching the unreached. I began to do a number of Dental mission trips at places where there was a lack of access to dental care. The work in such places revolved around basic dental care and an awareness of preventive dental care. I also worked as a consultant for Nireekshana ACET, where I did dental treatments for patients who were HIV+ and AIDS infected.

Why did you choose Master of Public Health graduate program?

From my experience of working in the rural parts of India, I have gathered that rather than going to places at random, it is better to have a planned strategy to achieve extensive benefits, particularly among children. I recognize that program planning, implementing and administrative skills would be highly beneficial to work among people where we are transforming their health behavior for life. Hence, I choose MPH to meet these needs.

“I wanted to make a difference in society by reaching the unreached”

Can you share what you are doing as a graduate research assistant in the IRH?

As a Graduate Research Assistant at the Institute for Rural Health (IRH), I help on the Mobile Dental Unit, assist the staff during the outreach events, enter the collected data on Redcap, assist with research, and engage in health education programs. I am grateful for the opportunities that I have at the IRH. I also intern there; this position gives me an experience of the real life projects. During the outreach events, I am exposed to various age groups and communities that provide me with an insight to actual needs and reflect on how they can be addressed.



CHHS Student Spotlight continued from page 1...

Can you describe the research you are currently involved in at the IRH?

I am currently researching the different models of dental programs in the community and will be conducting a survey to identify the barriers that are faced by the various programs to help outreach programs become more effective. The second project is to study the association of bone mineral density and various factors so that bone density screening can be promoted to prevent osteoporosis. I will also start an important project to study hypertension among a community of Mennonites. Moreover, I am excited that I am an author of an article being published soon on promoting influenza vaccine among elders in Kentucky.

Can you share your view of the US healthcare system?

The US healthcare system stresses prevention rather than treatment, which is good. I think it is important to increase awareness and screening for diseases rather than spend on treatment. Diseases diagnosed at an earlier stage have better prognosis. At one vaccination outreach for the homeless, I noticed though homeless, many of them had medical support from the government; some of them even had surgeries done. That, to me, was remarkable.

When I compare the US healthcare system with that of India's (the largest democracy on the other side of the Atlantic) the differences and similarities are striking to me. They both have a combination of public and private healthcare system (delivery and payment). The widest disparity lies in the healthcare expenditure; India spends a very negligible amount per person compared to the US. People asked me if the standard would be the same. In terms of prevention, India definitely lags way behind; however, in terms of treatment outcome, the two countries are comparable.

What are your goals upon graduation?

I would like to work in a health department or an organization that reaches out to the people in need. My areas of primary interest are oral healthcare problems and infectious diseases like tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and working on projects dealing with current epidemics.

