CanSupport
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What is CanSupport?

CanSupport is a medical nonprofit organization providing home-based palliative care in New Delhi, India. Funded entirely by private donors, they provide medical, financial, and counseling support to families fighting cancer.

Each year, the organization hosts city-wide events including Remembrance Day and the Walk for Cancer.
There are two administrative offices, although most CanSupport employees work in the field. 28 home care teams operate out of 14 centers, scattered throughout Delhi.
CanSupport asked me to create a booklet including 10-15 patient stories that illustrate how CanSupport’s interventions have positively affected the lives of their patients. The booklet will be distributed to the community at large events, to professionals interested in CanSupport careers, and, most importantly, to donors. Over half my time was spent on home visits, gathering information for the stories. The rest of my time was spent in the office or writing stories at my favorite coffee shops.
Patient stories

The most rewarding part was talking to the patients and piecing together their stories. I faced the challenge of distilling their complicated and heartfelt narratives into one-page long stories that would still allow the reader to empathize and feel as if they know the patient personally.

Despite the communication barrier of working through a translator, there was nothing more rewarding than the feeling of connecting with a patient. It was often a matter of elaborating on small details and asking them the right questions.
My direct impact on the organization.

I hope that publicizing patient stories in a booklet will have these positive effects:

- Allow other patients and families to relate to other people facing similar circumstances
- Show donors the positive effects of their contributions
- Raise community awareness about palliative care and cancer.
At CanSupport, patient stories are frequently written to report case progress. After learning how common they are, I was worried my work would be redundant.

However, stories are mostly written as technical reports, lacking anecdotes and emotions. I was determined to use my fresh perspective to write patient stories that stress the psychological narrative.

*I hope that CanSupport staff might be inspired by my approach, choosing to be creative with their patient stories moving forward.*
Impact on my academic choices and career plans

I liked that this internship threw me into something entirely new to me: medical journalism.

As someone interested in medicine along with many other things, I feel inspired to pursue medicine as a jumping off point. This internship showed me that there are many options beyond the traditional clinical path. I got to see all the moving parts of a medical nonprofit: healthcare, administration, accounting, publicity, etc.

Previously I was unsure about the Global Health certificate, but this real world experience has made me newly invigorated to pursue GHP.
People of the Organization

The people of CanSupport were incredible mentors and friends. They went above and beyond to make sure I was safe, healthy, having fun, and enjoying India.

Every new homecare team I visited greeted me with warmth. They were more than happy to help me with my project even if they had to go out of the way to pick me up from the metro and answer all of my (many) questions.
Living in Delhi

Delhi is really different from any other city I have lived in. There was definitely culture shock and adjustment to the summer heat and city crowds. Find some trusty apps (like Zomato) and reach out to Princeton students from New Delhi for the best places to eat and hang out. Make sure you explore Northern India on the weekends...
Exploring Northern India…