

A Spark from Abroad

Category: Across Borders and Cultures
written by Paul Rooprai | July 9, 2019

As a child, I had the fortunate opportunity to visit India, the birthplace of my parents, where we stayed with my grandfather in rural Punjab. He was sick at the time, suffering from multiple chronic illnesses, including a broken hip. He needed hip replacement surgery. Due to the area's limited healthcare resources, the wait time was long, and my family had to watch him suffer.

When he finally had surgery, the replacement hip was the wrong size and made one leg shorter than the other. I wanted to do something but couldn't. Witnessing this opened my eyes to the standards of health care abroad: doctor shortages, limited accessibility, and lack of investment. This early experience sparked my first interest in medicine and gave me a greater appreciation for health care in my own country of Canada.

Over time my understanding of medicine deepened from my interactions with patients in different healthcare settings. I realized that the field of medicine is constantly evolving, so the skill-set for doctors must evolve as well. I also realized that the practice of medicine involves a privilege and a responsibility: to be with and help patients at the most vulnerable moments of their lives.

As I start a new chapter in my life as a first-year medical student, I hope these observations and insights will guide and motivate me through the difficult journey ahead. And I hope to make something positive from my grandfather's suffering by advocating for patients just like him: at home in Canada and in other lands as well.

Paul Rooprai
Mississauga, Ontario