

A journey towards *health for all*- a travel fellowship in primary health care

Call for applications

Background

There are lacunae in access to basic health care in rural India. The current mode of medical education is urban focussed and oriented to speciality medicine. Students are not adequately exposed to the reality of health problems in our country and the practice of medicine at primary and secondary care level.

There are an increasing number of young doctors who are dissatisfied with the trends in mainstream health-care and searching for alternatives. They are looking for opportunities to experiment, innovate, become entrepreneurs and make a change in the present health scenario.

We have also appreciated the impact of the programme NIRMAN started in Maharashtra by Dr. Abhay and Dr. Rani Bang to identify, nurture and organize young change makers to solve various societal problems. We wanted to develop a programme along these lines appropriate to the rest of India.

To address this gap, we have started the 3 day rural sensitisation programme (RSP) for medical students and junior doctors at Tribal health initiative. RSP camps were organised to give MBBS students and young doctors an opportunity to see alternative approaches and interact with persons and issues that their medical colleges in South India do not seem to provide. The response was overwhelming with about 150 students requesting to participate in 2019. The feedback from the participants suggests a delicious discomfort with the unethical, commercial, specialty-drive trends and a search for a more humane, ethical, generalist / primary health care approach.

This has led to the idea of creating a mechanism or program where interested young doctors can embark on a 12-month journey of exploration, both of yourselves and your ideas, and of alternate approaches to rural and primary health care – the models, the concepts and the persons behind them. The approach in this semi-structured programme is to provide what conventional medical education does not provide today because of its regimented boundaries. We are trying to offer an ‘uncollege approach’¹, an educational journey for interested students to explore alternatives to health care.

Another programme that we have drawn inspiration from is the Community Health Learning Programme (CHLP), Bengaluru and the Community Health Fellowship Programme (CHFP), Bhopal which has been set up Society for Community Health Awareness Research and Action (SOCHARA)². CHLP is a semi structured training programme where participants set their own learning objectives

¹ The word ‘uncollege’ is being used in a deliberate sense of going beyond limits and boundaries of traditional education to an alternative approach to education to develop ones perspective to medicine and health through journey, experiences, meeting different people, involvement in the field, working in the community, observing real need, readings and reflections.

² http://sochara.org/sophe/Community_Health_Learning_Programme_Bengaluru

to explore social paradigm of community and public health. These fellowships focus on theoretical learning, practical field based experience with a network of NGOs and mentoring.

Such programmes are being offered in multiple social sectors due to the recognition that it is people who bring about change. Such a mentoring programme through real world exposures is an idea whose time has come in the health care field in India.

Purpose

Offering young doctors of India a seat on a 12-month journey of searching and learning

- Exploring alternative pathways in pursuit of “Health For All³” with special focus on the marginalised and the poor.
- Exploring themselves and what they want to do as doctors in India

The primary intention is for you to find a semi-structured safe space to explore directions in health care, through opportunities to visit, work at and interact with multiple models and people in the field of primary and secondary care. This programme does not aim to develop a set of clinical skills or a specified academic content. However exposure will help you recognise the skills that you may need and initiate the development of competence in these areas. Your skills and competence can be further honed and built at a later stage maybe through post-graduate training or further immersion.

Is this programme for you

If you troubled, confused and dissatisfied with the practice of modern medicine as you have learnt it and are looking for alternative options towards addressing health needs of society.

The basic qualification for this course is an MBBS. The programme is designed for the period between internship and PG training. It will require you to take off one year to participate in this programme.

Although we have in mind young doctors after MBBS, we realise that there are doctors who are searching at different stages of their lives. Therefore this programme is also open to those who have completed post-graduation or who are in the middle of their careers and are looking for new directions.

Educational approach

The program offers semi-structured engagements in multiple real-life contexts. The focus is on the individual and facilitating their search and journey through experiential learning and immersion experience. You will therefore be required to work and contribute to the organisations you are placed with, not just as observers but also learning through work.

The programme will involve:

- 2- 6 months stints in Rural Hospitals, Primary Health Care programs and Social Development Initiatives

³ We are using ‘Health for all’ as a concept as it was stated in the Alma Atta Declaration in 1978 of health as a multi-dimensional concept that we need to work towards

- Interactions with Mentors and Practitioners in the field
- Networking and Cross-Learning with fellow-travellers
- Sessions for Stimulation, Reflection, Reading, Discussion

Structure of programme:

Three postings (10 months [6 + 2+ 2]):

One posting of 6 months will be in an organisation which has significant clinical components of primary and secondary care. Two shorter postings of 2 months each, one of these should be in an organisation which has significant exposure to social development initiatives.

Bridge period (2 months): Introduction, inter-session meetings with fellow travellers, interactions with mentors, networking

The duration of postings can be chosen flexibly based on your needs and what is best for you and also what is feasible and optimal for the host organisations. However the minimum duration of the Fellowship will be 12 months.

Selection:

The selection will be based on application form which explains the reason why you want to participate in the Fellowship programme followed by a face to face meeting (see enclosed application form).

E-mails for correspondence are given at the end of this writeup.

Clinical exposures in primary/secondary care settings: the postings will be based on your choice.

During these postings you will:

- Work as a junior doctor in the hospital/clinic
- Learn how the hospital/clinic functions: management, training, finance
- Be involved in the community health- health care delivery, village clinics, health worker/community nurse training, and health education. A significant part of their involvement should be in the community, to understand their problems and develop relationships.
- Interaction with different levels of staff to understand their perspective. To learn how the organisation started, how choices are made and how its functions.

Bridge periods

Introductory session (~ 1 week): Introduce you to the programme. Explore issues of health and health care. Introduction to principles of primary care. Facilitate critical observation, reflection and learning. Form relationships with your classmates and fellow travellers. Discussions with your mentors.

Inter-session meeting (~ 1 week): This period would be for review and rejuvenation. You will meet with your mentors and fellow class-mates

Final session (~ 1 week): to review experiences, learnings and explorations and think about future directions for yourselves.

Exposure to non-health fields/social development initiatives: Each of you will have one short exposure to broader inter-sectoral fields of your choice such as culture, environment, agriculture, governance, livelihood, water, education, governance and law.

Mentoring

Each of you will have a mentor during the course and a local supervisor at each of the sites where you are posted. The mentor will have periodic discussions with you by phone or e-mail to explore larger issues, problems that you may face and provide informal support. The local supervisor will be responsible for arranging your programme at each site, reviewing your progress and facilitating discussions and reflections.

Flexibility : Keep the posting plans and exit options flexible, so that you can discover what interests you and gives you passion and that which best suits you and the host organisations. However you would be expected to complete the one year duration of the Fellowship.

Readings and resources: The programme will have a required set of readings and resources including movies.

Themes of the programme:

- The idea of comprehensive and people-centred Primary health Care
- Discovering the range of medical skills and competencies needed for this approach
- Understanding a Community including socio-political analysis
- Raw need and poverty – the challenges people face
- The tools for social entrepreneurship and pathways for change, to be able to start up a new initiative including the managerial skills required and the discipline of the long haul.
- Models that have made a difference and role models that have walked the path before
- Demonstration that ethical health care and primary health care are viable and do-able
- To be challenged out of the security of status quo

Number of students per batch: 5-10 (starting with 5 students in first year).

Centres for clinical exposure

- Tribal health Initiative, Sittilingi
- Gudalur Adivasi Hospital, Gudalur
- Basic HealthCare services Trust, Rajasthan
- Christian Hospital, Bissam Cuttack
- KCPatty Primary Health Center, Kodaikanal Taluk, Tamil Nadu
- Swaraj Comprehensive Community Health Program, Kalahandi district, Odisha
- Jan Swasthya Sahyog, Bilaspur

Stipend: A stipend will be provided to cover basic living expenses and travel

Description of the Primary and secondary health care programmes and opportunities for the traveller

1. Ashwini, Accord and AMS, Gudalur, Tamil Nadu :

Description : Base Hospital, Community Health Program, Education and Development Initiatives, located in an Adivasi movement and organisation.

Opportunities for the Traveller : Hospital work – in partnership with members of the tribal community

Exposure to community based programs : Mental Health, Sickle Cell Anemia etc

Optimum Duration : 3 – 4 months

Mentors: Drs. Nandakumar Menon and Shailaja Menon

Link: <http://ashwini.org/new/>

2. Basic Health Services, Rajasthan :

Description : A network of Primary Health Care Clinics in remote parts of south Rajasthan, that are Nurse-Run and Doctor-Supported with linkages to community based programs on health, migration, livelihood

Opportunities for the Traveller: To learn and deliver primary healthcare in resource limited settings, to learn about intersection of health, migration and livelihoods; to learn about key policy issues affecting healthcare of the undeserved, to undertake a study on a pertinent local issue and design a solution including initiating implementation

Optimum Duration: 6 months

Mentors: Dr. Pavithra Mohan and Dr. Sanjana B Mohan

Link: <https://bhs.org.in/>

3. Tribal Health Initiative, Sittilingi, Tamil Nadu :

Description : A Base Hospital with a community Health program and other initiatives in Education, Organic Agriculture, Community Organisation, Handicrafts etc.

Opportunities for the Traveller : Combination of clinical work and development of skills at the Hospital, seeing how to handle complicated cases in a resource constrained set up ; Community and Home visits ; involvement with Organic Farmers, Porgai handicrafts,

Education and community organisation. Observe how communities organise themselves, plan and implement innovative community development schemes.

Optimum Duration : 2-6 months

Mentors: Dr. Regi George, Dr. Lalitha Regi, Dr. Ravikumar Manoharan

Link: <http://www.tribalhealth.org/>

4. Primary Health Care Program, KCPatti, Tamil Nadu :

Description : A Primary Health Care program with a Health Centre and comprehensive care for 6,000 population, and care accessed by 15,000 population.

Opportunities for the Traveller : To learn about patient-centred care, family medicine and primary health care approach, 3 stage assessments, working as a team with health workers from the target community- both at the clinic and on home visits. Please note that we can only take persons who can communicate in Tamil because none of the health workers communicate in English

Optimum Duration : 4-8 weeks

Mentors: Dr. Rajkumar Ramasamy and Dr. Mary Ramaswamy

Link: <http://kcpphc.org/home/about/>

5. Swasthya Swaraj, Kalahandi, Odisha :

Description : A comprehensive primary health care program with two 24x7, nurse-run, doctor-backed health centres in remote locations, and community based initiatives in health and education in 76 villages.

Opportunities for the Traveller :

Swasthya Swaraj gives a young graduate in medicine the opportunity to delve into Primary Healthcare and Community Health in the sylvan hill forests of South Western Odisha. Learn how to provide basic maternal and child health services as well as other medical services in a low resource setting, teach and inspire voluntary health workers, conduct village meetings and win over the community, develop health education materiel for adolescent girls, pregnant mothers and various vulnerable groups, do operational community health research and understand the ground reality of Government-run programs and inaccessible communities.

Optimum Duration : 3-4 months

Mentor: Dr. Aquinas Edassery

Link: <http://www.swasthyaswaraj.org/>

6. Christian Hospital, Bissam Cuttack and Mitra :

Description : A busy 200-bedded secondary hospital 250 km from a referral centre, with a community program focusing on health and education in 53 tribal villages.

Opportunities for the Traveller :

In the hospital : To develop skills and confidence through actual work as a junior doctor on duty

In the Community : As an observer and participant in Mobile Clinics, Experience of multiple initiatives including the schools

Optimum Duration : 2- 6 months

Mentor: Dr. John C Oommen

Link: <http://chbmck.org/>

7. Jan Swasthya Sahyog, Bilaspur

Description: A three tier community health program in Rural Central India with a health worker based intensive community program, 3 subcenters and a referral center hospital. Also programs supporting public health systems in health and nutrition, quality improvements and illness specific programs.

Opportunities for the Traveller: Combination of clinical and community health work. Exposure to complicated cases (workups and management) of all the different specialties especially in resource constrained set up; participate in community clinics. Exposure to community based programs of maternal health, child health and nutrition, NCD care etc.

Optimum Duration: 3 – 6 months

Mentors: Drs. Yogesh Jain and Raman Kataria

Link: <http://www.jssbilaspur.org/>

Supporting faculty

Dr. Rakhil Ghaitonde, Professor, Achutha Menon Centre, Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Technology, Trivandrum

Dr. Shubhasri Balakrishnan, Senior Technical Advisor, Centre of Maternal and Newborn Health in India, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

Dr. Sukanya Rangamani, Scientist, ICMR National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research, Bengaluru

Dr. Narayan Devadasan, Director, Institute of Public health, Bengaluru

Dr. Roopa Devadasan, Public health doctor and teacher

Dr. Sara Bhattacharji, Retired Professor of Community Medicine, Christian Medical College, Vellore

Dr. Anand Zachariah, Professor of Medicine, Christian Medical College, Vellore

The base of 'A journey towards health for all- a travel fellowship in primary health care' will be at the Tribal Health Initiative, Sittilingi.

Starting date of programme: April 1, 2020.

If you are interested in the fellowship please write to:

rhccfellowship@gmail.com;

Copy to:

Regi George, THI, Sittilingi - _regilalitha@gmail.com

Anand Zachariah, CMC Vellore- Zachariah@cmcvellore.ac.in