

Dear Sashi, Raja and Dr. GC,

We start this letter feeling a little sad, because we know it signals the end of a project that has captured our hearts and minds. At the same time, we are so excited to share our story with you, to reflect on all the things we have seen and learned from you, and to explain why each of us is walking away with an appreciation for your passion, vision, and above all, humility.

Our consciousness of what was about to happen really came during our six-hour layover at London Heathrow. The first six weeks of the project had been a blur of weekly assignments, Skype calls with each of you late in the evenings, and running from hospital to hospital in Boston to interview doctors and administrators. We felt like we had learned so much but at the same time, were still completely unprepared for the days ahead of us. Now, sitting at the gate after three hours of sleep on a five-hour overnight flight and wandering aimlessly around the airport for six hours more, we no longer had the energy to pretend. We sat and discussed our ambitions and fears for our trip. For some of us, it was our first trip to India, which was met with both fear and excitement. Others were fighting distractions from an uncertain future. But behind that fog and our weary eyes still, we shared a common motivation to bring our best foot forward. It was that motivation that got us on to the plane, and off the plane when we set foot in Hyderabad at 4:30am.

Our first 24 hours in Hyderabad were nothing short of an adventure, and we won't bother to bore you with the details of attempting to make our way from Kismatpur without a map or a phone. But suffice to say, we were sufficiently exhausted by early evening and upon learning that Sashi had tried to call for us during the day, decided it would be best to call it an early night. Our first day awaited us.

When we arrived at LVPEI we were first impressed and then intimidated by the size of your operation! What difference we were going to make there was as unclear as ever. But Sashi, within five minutes of meeting you and getting our first glimpse into the hospital, our minds were put at ease. Your energy and enthusiasm for having us there were contagious. And when we ran into Raja and Annapurna over the course of the day, it all started to become very real. Your openness and kind welcome were just what we needed to melt away the stress of the day before.

(Sashi, Nicole and [name removed] were especially touched by your thoughtful birthday gift! We will never forget the security guards repeating "Sashi Mohan, Sashi Mohan, 404, Sashi Mohan?" when we returned from dinner, to ensure we were the appropriate recipients of your delicious chocolate bar.)

On our first full day, we felt like we had been thrown into the eye of the storm. Despite all the commotion around the clinic, Dr. Rajeev's hallway felt calm and controlled. And over the day we started to see how patients went through a typical day at LVPEI. Despite all the pre-work we had done, it was only on this day that it all made sense. It would set the stage for comparison to the other three clinics we shadowed. In each, we could see how different

styles of management and leadership could change the flow and feel in a clinic. Some felt like a walk through a park on a sunny day, while others felt like you were holding up an umbrella against a torrential storm. Through our analysis we have been able to quantify what some of those practices mean to patient waiting times. We are excited to share those with you in the coming days.

Some of our strongest memories were the times we spent with Dr. GC. Your grace and thoughtfulness are forever planted in our minds. Whether it was being careful not to load us with your own biases, taking us to dinner with your lovely wife and trying to get us to like paan (though Nicole can safely say she does not, unfortunately) or listening appreciatively to our observations, we always felt you were really listening and really thinking about what we were saying. Your passion and humility will stay with us for a long time to come. We are excited to see you again at MIT Sloan, to show you the results of our hard work. We hope they will be useful to you, and will plant a seed for future work, whether with the next group of students from the Global Health Lab or otherwise.

One of our most valuable experiences was the time we spent surveying patients in the walk-in counter, trying to understand why they had not made an appointment. Just being in that room for an hour helped us appreciate how difficult it must be to sacrifice an entire day to see a doctor, and yet we saw that there was certainly no shortage of patients willing to do so. It wasn't a surprise quite honestly, given the reputation LVPEI has for delivering high quality eye care for all. And though our project scope was limited only to the outpatient department, the experience motivated us to work hard and deliver valuable recommendations.

In our last few days at LVPEI, it was snapshots of moments that stood out in our minds – being greeted warmly by Dr. GC as we passed in the hallways, spending lunches on the balcony with Sashi discussing our hopes for our futures, or seeing Raja in his scrubs in the OR. We felt like we had reached the point where we had seen each of you in your element, and there was no more need for formalities. We felt like we had started to understand the spirit of your wonderful organization. Unfortunately, we had to be satisfied with only scratching the surface, as we packed our bags and jumped in a taxi for an early flight back to Boston after two short weeks.

While we understand the importance of our work, and the need to improve your patients' experience, at the same time we hope you all take time to reflect every now and then and appreciate the true value of your work. Your commitment to always improving, and to be able to provide eye care to all is no easy task, and we are humbled to be a part of it.

Here at MIT Sloan, our mission is “to develop principled, innovative leaders who improve the world, and to generate ideas that advance management practice.”

Suffice to say, we truly and wholeheartedly believe that each of you are those leaders, and our inspiration.

Thank you.

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15.S07 GlobalHealth Lab  
Spring 2013

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