

More Effective Health Policies and Stronger Patient Engagement for a Healthier South Africa: Lessons Learned, and Recommendations for National Health Insurance (NHI)

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My Program

I wrote a summary chapter on health landscape focused on risk factors and burden of disease in South Africa, which is a section of a report that my research team was working on, in preparation for a conference on fiscal interventions for improved population health outcomes. I also did literature review and case studies on patient engagement in South Africa, which enabled me to come up with lessons learned and recommendations for the upcoming National Health Insurance (NHI) in South Africa.

At work, Wits School of Public Health, Johannesburg, South Africa



Most Rewarding Aspects of My Program

- I enjoyed doing research on health economics, public health and health policy
- I enjoyed learning about an interesting field that I knew nothing about before through literature review and case studies.
- I enjoyed being fully immersed in an academic environment, attending seminars, conferences, engaging in academic and scholarly activities with experts in the field of public health and health economics
- I enjoyed presenting my work and receiving feedback, and contributing to the team-wide intellectual discussion
- I enjoyed meeting other student researchers with similar interests
- I enjoyed being exposed to a rewarding research area that enabled me to economic and political theories to help make the population healthier

Visiting and Helping the Rural and Unfortunate Populations in South Africa



Impact on the Organization

- Contributed a chapter for a report presented at the Fiscal Meeting, an academic event that took place in July in Houghton Estate, Johannesburg, South Africa, where panel discussions were held between my research team PRICELESS and many experts and scholars in health economics.
- Got the team started on a new project on patient engagement by looking at case studies involving public participation and making recommendations based on current challenges and previous successes and failures. The report I wrote on this topic provided the team with some solid data and fresh ideas.

My Team (I'm Wearing a Scarf with South African Colors in this Group Photo)



Career Choices and Academic Pursuits

- Career: I fully enjoyed doing research in the field of health economics and I may go into this particular area of research if I end up in academia; I also thoroughly enjoyed performing case studies, making policy recommendations, and applying knowledge and theories to real-world challenges in decision making. This also suggested to me that I may explore other potential career options such as law or consulting.
- Academic Plan: I'm planning on writing my JP and senior thesis on topics related to this research program, in the area of health economics or health policy.

Personal Growth/Cultural Awareness

- It's been an extremely rewarding experience and a research field that I'm truly passionate about. I'd like to thank the Rainbow Nation for the numerous life-changing experiences and lessons I've learned from shadowing fieldworkers in rural Africa, trips to Robben Island Prison, Apartheid Museum, etc. Thank you for inspiring me with legacy of Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as the idea of civil disobedience. I want to thank the average people I've met in South Africa, ranging from the janitor for my office to security guards, from local college students to uber drivers. Their kindness, honesty, hardwork, resilience, optimism, and courage have touched my heart. Speaking to them in their trial languages, whether Zulu or Xhosa, has always brightened my day. Hearing their stories has also made me aware of how blessed and privileged I've been and how many things I take for granted in my life.

