

# [Valle provided an opportunity to deepen my understanding](https://assignbuster.com/valle-provided-an-opportunity-to-deepen-my-understanding/)

Valle Hermosa is a small town in northern Mexico Mygrandfather lived in a small town that lacked any hospital or health clinic.

Community members, in the event of an emergency, were forced to drive acrossthe border into Brownsville, Texas to access medical care. Before my grandfathermoved to the United States, I had not considered that access to care variedgreatly depending on where you lived in the world. He was diagnosed at the timewith esophageal cancer, and My freshman year of college, he moved UnitedStates. My grandfather’s medical care placed a large financialburden on my family just as college began and, consequently, I became financiallyresponsible for my academic and living expenses. I worried that working nearlyfull-time would hinder my ambition to pursue a medical degree, but I firmly discernedthat my situation also provided an opportunity to deepen my understanding ofthe medical field outside the classroom.

It was in this pursuit that I began asa medical scribe at Providence Emergency Room. The extended hours of thehospital allowed me to work nights and weekends, and then attend class duringthe day. One evening a man, paralyzed from the waist down, presentedin the emergency room complaining of a pungent smell arising from hiswheelchair.

During his physical exam, we found a large ulcer on his buttockdeep enough to expose bone. His injury, the result of tremendous neglect, requiredsurgery to prevent the infection from taking his life. The patient reported thathe had been evicted from his apartment and, now homeless, had been unable toattend his physical therapy sessions. I was shocked by the cascade of eventsthat allowed for a pressure ulcer to develop into a life-threatening condition. To my surprise, I would continue to see this patient numerous times throughoutmy two years at Providence Hospital. A combination of heroin abuse and mental illnessmade it difficult for him to seek care outside the emergency room.

I admiredhow the physicians built his trust over the years by treating him withunderstanding and compassion each time he arrived, and I desperately wishedthere was more I could do to help. Ultimately, my time at Providence Hospital helpedme understand the inextricable link between poverty and disease, and Irecognized the tremendous need for physicians to serve in under-resourcedareas. Concurrently, my passion for social justice began tocrystallize.

I vividly remember listening to Dr. Paul Farmer, a leading globalhealth expert and human rights activist, deliver a lecture on tuberculosis. Hespoke about the role of social justice in healthcare, and the need for morefunding and research to be allocated towards conditions that disproportionatelyaffect underserved communities. It was my first realization that many peopleare still not receiving the benefits of contemporary medicine. Encouraged by hislecture, I began working as a Research Assistant at the Maryland Center forHealth Equity to elucidate barriers to colorectal cancer screening in AfricanAmerican communities. While interviewing participants I fostered perhaps mymost important skill during college: listening. Through their stories I developedan impassioned awareness of the socioeconomic and cultural barriers that hinderaccess to care. better individual, a more empathetic student, and hopefully amore informed doctor.

After graduating, I was awarded the Mickey LelandInternational Hunger fellowship to lead a research project on food insecurityin Uganda. I have spent the past year documenting the remarkable stories of theAcholi community that live in the northern region. This community has sufferedfrom significant hardships for decades – insurrection of the Lord’s ResistanceArmy, forced relocation to internally displaced camps, and political failures –that have left many without access to a stable food supply or reliable medicalcare. My Ugandan colleagues are hopeful that better visibility on theinternational stage will translate to more reliable delivery of aid. As for me, I am hopeful as well.

o consider my responsibility to pull these lessons frommy experiences in Uganda to ensure that I am a better individual, a moreinformed student and hopefully a wiser doctor.