



## *Perspective/Opinion*

# **Resilience in Rwanda**

By Hamsitha Karra, M2 – 2022 Dr. Elaine Kohler Global Summer Research Scholar

*Student doctor Karra spent four weeks in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2022 advancing the project, An Assessment of Trauma Registry Missing Data and Standardization at the University Teaching Hospital.*

The moment I arrived on the streets of Kigali, I was struck by the immense similarity I felt between it and my hometown back in India. Even the hospital that was to be my workplace for the next month had an atmosphere nearly identical to the one I had been born in. The only difference was that this time, I was a medical student eager to learn how to provide care in a low-resource setting rather than a young patient waiting to receive care.

The month flew by in a whirlwind as I simultaneously sought to educate myself on Rwandan history, especially its relatively recent genocide, and the workings of a large public health hospital in Central/East Africa. Along with my mentor, [Christopher Dodgion, MD](#), I worked with local hospital staff to better understand the care of trauma patients at [The University Teaching Hospital of Kigali \(CHUK\)](#) and how my time could seek to provide valuable information for quality improvement.

Most importantly, I learned the value of being flexible when doing global health research, because despite rigorous planning and several meetings surrounding how my month in Kigali was supposed to look, arriving on the ground in Rwanda introduced new challenges and opportunities regarding my research. With the support of Dr. Dodgion and my fellow Kohler Scholar, Heloise, I was able to adapt and ultimately provide our local partners with the information they needed.

I also learned the importance of having cultural and historical context when traveling to do research in a community outside of my own (and even while doing research in my own community, for that matter). Without this context, I do not think I could be the respectful and humble visiting scholar that our local partners deserved.

I also realized the importance of community partners and people in place who can help you find the best way to learn from and assist the community you wish to serve. Most poignantly, I learned the importance of hope and positivity when doing global work. The nature of healthcare in Rwanda is not just or equitable by even the more basic standards, but everyone we met, from the physicians to the nurses to the hospital staff, was striving to create the kind of system that helps everyone who needs it. Their work, their desire to improve health standards in their community, and their resilience further inspire me to hope for and strive for a world where healthcare is a right.

I am incredibly grateful to play whatever humble role that I can in working towards that goal.

*For further reading:*

Review Hamsitha's summer global health collaborative research [presentation](#) with mentor, Dr. Chris Dodgion, Trauma and Critical Care Surgery.

*Hamsitha Karra is a second-year medical student at MCW and is the Board Chair of the Education Resource Committee at the Saturday Clinic for the Uninsured.*