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Becoming a Bridge

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The purpose of my honors project was to bring awareness to such an important topic. The nation of Ghana’s healthcare system is in need of serious attention. Although the nation is fruitful in agricultural resources, the country is lacking a healthcare system that provides coverage for all people and has yet to find lasting solutions to the growing pandemic diseases affecting the lives of the Ghanaian people. The nation of Ghana is suffering, and there need to people willing to catalyze change in order to salvage the future of this developing nation. The main purpose of my project was to call upon physicians, nurses, and healthcare administrators to become bridges to these countries in need of our help. Living in a nation like the United States allows us resources to some of the newest and fastest technologies available. By joining together and bridging the gap between our nation and these nations in need, like Ghana, we can eradicate the serious problems that are threatening the lives of so many.

Malaria is endemic and perennial in all parts of Ghana, but most prominent in the northern part of the country. Malaria is the largest cause of mortality and morbidity in Ghana. According to UNICEF, 3.5 million people contract malaria every year. Although the entire population is at risk, children under five years of age and pregnant women are at higher risk due to lowered immunity. *Plasmodium falciparum*, a protozoan parasite, accounts for 85-90% of all infections and is transmitted by the female *Anopheles* mosquito. These species generally bite late in the night and are most abundant in rural and peri-urban areas.

The Ghana Health Service is responsible for delivery of public health and clinical services. The GHS operates at three levels; national, regional (10 regions), and district (216 districts). There are 321 hospitals, 760 health centers, and 1,124 clinics through GHS. However, the ratio of 0.6 nurses and 0.1 doctors per 1000 population falls short of the World Health Organization minimum, which is 2.2 and 0.2 per 1000 population. The Community-based Health Planning Services was launched in 2012 to address the challenge that at the time 70% of Ghanaians lived over eight kilometers from the nearest health care provider. This is issue was exacerbated by by poor roads and transportation infrastructure. The National Malaria Control Program of GHS has partnered with UNICEF to launch a new Behavior Change Communications campaign to encourage Ghanaian households to use insecticide treated bed nets.

The National Health Insurance Scheme, NHIS, is costly and unfair. The NHIS relies heavily on tax funding and excludes over 80% of the population; this means that everyone pays for NHIS but only a few have access to it. Out-of-pocket payments for healthcare are more than the double the World Health Organization recommended rate. The average cost per insurance claim more than doubled between 2008 and 2009, and have continued to increase since then. Cost escalation poses serious questions about its sustainability and effectiveness.

The Christian Health Association of Ghana is a faith based organization made up of a network of 183 health facilities and health training institutions. CHAG’s mission is to uphold the health and well-being of the Ghanaian people. CHAG strives to promote the healing ministry of Christ, and is a reliable partner in providing the health needs of the people in Ghana. CHAG specific focuses on the marginalized and underserved populations in Ghana.

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With an emphasis on communication and mass media in society, the use of public service announcements to spread important messages has become more and more popular. PSAs are critical tools in generating awareness and dispensing information to a wide audience. I created a PSA to distribute the information to a wide audience. Specifically, I wanted to do the PSA in Twi, to show how learning the language of these countries in need can bring change makers one step closer to the people of the nation. To close the gap between the people who need help and the people who can provide the help. The language is a beautiful illustration of the extensive history of the country. Communication between provider and patient is an integral part of the service they receive, and I felt learning their native language was extremely important in my study of service and healthcare.