

# Can Health Literacy Improve Access to Health Care?

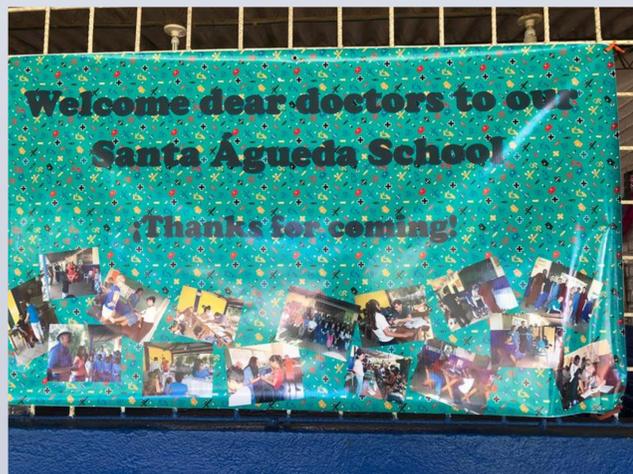
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TAP TO GO  
BACK TO  
KIOSK MENU

## Introduction

Although poverty plays a huge role in preventing people from seeking healthcare, I have learned that lack of awareness can be just as dangerous. Despite having educated parents and adequate financial resources, my sister passed away due to complications from spina bifida. My experience in El Salvador illuminated how geography and socioeconomic background impact access to healthcare. Disparities in healthcare exist across geographical and economic boundaries. There are many people in the United States of America who are unaware of screening procedures that can detect serious illnesses when they are still benign. Therefore, healthcare professionals have a duty to increase awareness, which can help to improve access to healthcare.



## Discussion

### India

- My inspiration to pursue medicine: my sister had spina bifida in 1996 and passed away from the complications.
- Learning about this loss encouraged me to eventually pursue medicine.
- My parents were unaware that spina bifida could be prevented despite having adequate financial and intellectual resources.



### El Salvador- January 2018 Outreach Trip

- While on a VCOM medical outreach trip, I saw an eight-year old boy with pyloric stenosis who suffered from failure to thrive due to daily post-prandial projectile vomiting.
- This condition is normally treated during infancy
- However, he was undiagnosed due to lack of access to healthcare.
- This experience had a significant impact on my passion for healthcare and future career goals.

### USA- July 2019

- Although I knew that there were health disparities in the USA, this was the first time I witnessed it.
- Lack of healthcare is not limited to certain regions or socioeconomic backgrounds
- I worked with a patient in her sixties who had metastatic cervical cancer, which is becoming increasingly rare in developed countries due to pap smears
- This patient was unaware of the benefits of pap smears and thus had never had one.



## Conclusion

Some suggestions that can help to bridge the gap in healthcare.

- Encourage those with access to healthcare to utilize primary care physicians for wellness checks, prevention and treatment.
- Provide education about screening procedures such as colonoscopy, pap smear etc.
- Provide mobile health trips, outreach and camps to remote locations.
- Make preventative healthcare a part of high school curriculum.
- Use social media to spread awareness.