

Observations from a Private Healthcare System in Valsad, Gujarat, India

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Abstract

India's healthcare landscape is made of a dual structure of a more affordable government-run public system being more common among rural and lower-income populations, and a private healthcare system that is widely used for its more advanced facilities. As an American medical student, I had the opportunity to spend the summer after my first year of medical school shadowing at a private hospital in India, where I observed the benefits and higher-quality care of a private hospital. Despite these advantages, its infrastructure was still not as advanced as that of standard U.S. hospitals, further reflecting the disparities in access to healthcare in resource-constrained areas. For example, the entire hospital only had one ultrasound machine, and air conditioning was available solely in the ICU and operating rooms.

My shadowing internship was at Lotus Hospital, a private multi-specialty hospital in Valsad, Gujarat, India where I shadowed a wide range of medical specialties including: orthopedic surgery, general surgery, urology, OB/GYN, ICU, endocrinology, and neurology. This poster presents my personal experiences at Lotus Hospital, focusing on the unique challenges faced by private institutions in India. My experience taught me the importance of understanding healthcare in diverse, lower socioeconomic environments and reinforced how exposure to different healthcare systems can make medical students more globally competent and innovative. Such international experiences are important in shaping future physicians and making them more adaptable to various challenges.

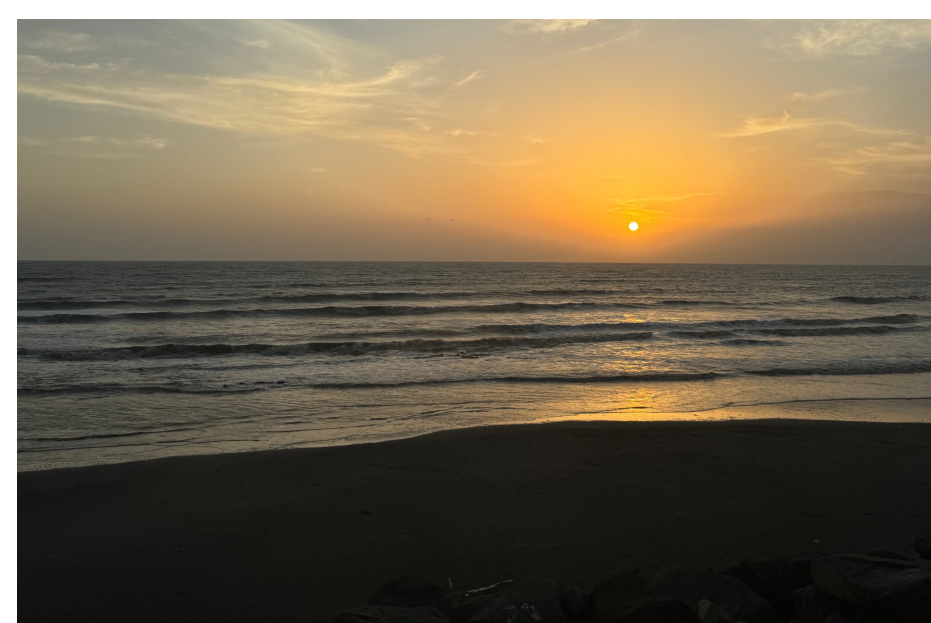
Introduction and Location

This poster presents key insights from my shadowing experience at Lotus Hospital in Valsad, Gujarat, India. Working within a lower-resource setting, I observed how healthcare providers adapt to infrastructure and resource limitations to meet patient needs. This experience not only expanded my understanding of healthcare in a global context but also fosters critical skills including flexibility, innovation, and cultural sensitivity.

Lotus Hospital is located in Valsad, Gujarat, India, a city in Western India known to be a hub for agriculture, trade and commerce as it is situated along the Arabian Sea Coast. Valsad has a growing healthcare sector for both urban and rural communities, providing an ideal location to learn about the healthcare challenges and disparities in resource availability typical of semi-urban and rural areas in India.



Tower Road (Main St)



Tithal Beach, view of Arabian Sea



Patient Population

Gujarat, India is home to a diverse patient population with a population of 63 million people. This state has seen significant urbanization, leading to many differences in health statistics and outcomes among the different areas within Gujarat. Despite all of these differences, Gujarat has made lots of progress in enhancing healthcare access. For example, initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana have played a significant role in expanding healthcare accessibility, with over 15.5 million Ayushman Bharat insurance cards issued and approximately 2,756 hospitals accepting these cards.

However, Gujarat still faces challenges in managing both communicable and non-communicable diseases. The prevalence of non-communicable diseases, including ischemic heart disease and diabetes, has led to a significant burden on the healthcare system, with non-communicable diseases contributing to 59.77% of the state's disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). Additionally, communicable diseases like tuberculosis (TB) remain a concern, with Gujarat having one of the highest TB rates in the country. Rural areas often face higher incidences of malnutrition, particularly stunting and wasting among children, with districts including Valsad reporting one of the highest rates. This highlights the need for targeted interventions, especially in under-resourced districts

In the context of Valsad specifically where I shadowed, the patient population at private sector hospitals reflects a blend of urban and rural residents seeking advanced medical care in specialized settings. These private hospitals generally cater to individuals from middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds, as private healthcare tends to be more expensive than public alternatives. The medical conditions encountered frequently include both acute and chronic issues, with a notable prevalence of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory illnesses. Due to the limited availability of specialized facilities in rural public healthcare, many patients travel from surrounding areas to access advanced diagnostics or surgical procedures. However, even private hospitals in Valsad face resource constraints similar to those of public facilities, with limitations in advanced imaging equipment and infrastructure. This reality reflects broader systemic challenges in Gujarat's healthcare landscape, where the healthcare infrastructure still lags behind that of urban centers. In a 2016 study, it was also found that local health systems, including those in Valsad, may not be efficiently utilizing available resources relative to the demand, leading to potential gaps in care and a need for improved management strategies to better align resources with patient needs.

Infrastructural and Resource Limitations



Operating Room



Typical ICU Room



Emergency Department



Inpatient Ward

Lotus Hospital offers valuable healthcare services; however, it encounters several infrastructural and resource limitations including:

- Patient overcrowding and limited space for volume overload
- 1 ultrasound machine in hospital
- Paper Medical Record Keeping with minimal use of EMR
- Lack of patient privacy
- Limited specialties
- Air conditioning only in select areas: ICU and Operating Rooms
- Inadequate sterile material storage
- Outdated patient beds
- High patient volume and burden to healthcare workers
 - Endocrinologist would treat 50-60+ patients daily

Given these limitations, Lotus Hospital did have several notable aspects as a private hospital, including:

- Laparoscopic Surgery
- Advanced Vital Sign Monitoring Systems
- MRI machine, CT scans, and C-arm machine for orthopedic surgeries
- Dedicated Healthcare staff
- Strong referral network

Personal Development

As a first-year medical student, shadowing at Lotus Hospital gave me a unique perspective on how healthcare systems operate in lower-resource communities. I gained insight into the challenges faced by both providers and patients and observed firsthand how physicians adapt their approaches to deliver effective care despite limited resources, including a constrained supply of medications. This experience taught me the importance of flexibility, creativity, and cultural sensitivity in medicine. Understanding the challenges in diverse healthcare environments deepened my appreciation for the adaptability needed to deliver quality care globally. Additionally, exposure to diverse settings like Lotus Hospital will enhance my competence as a future physician, enabling me to better serve diverse patient populations both at home and abroad.



With the Nursing OR team



With the ICU team

Conclusions/ Future Prospects

My experience as an American medical student shadowing at Lotus Hospital was truly life-changing and invaluable. It provided me with a unique lens through which to understand the complexities of healthcare in lower-resource settings. This exposure not only broadened my perspective but also reinforced my commitment to approaching medicine with empathy and cultural sensitivity. Looking ahead, I am inspired to pursue opportunities in global health initiatives that aim to address disparities in healthcare access and quality. By integrating the insights gained from this experience into my future practice, I hope to contribute to improving healthcare delivery for diverse populations, ensuring that every patient receives the compassionate and high-quality care they deserve.

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