

## Tweeting to Save a Life

By Suhav Joshi

The summer of 2013 was shaping up to be the worst summer of my life. In May, as a rising high school senior, all I could imagine was a life filled with SAT prep books and endless days of writing and editing college essays. But, in thinking about summer plans, my thoughts kept drifting to SMU, a school whose students I've always admired. So, on a whim, I applied for an internship at SMU, pretty sure that they would never accept me, a high school junior, for such a coveted spot.

I submitted my request and was shocked when on a warm Saturday evening while studying for finals I got an unexpected call from Dr. Eric Bing, an SMU professor of global health. After exchanging pleasantries, he grilled me about what I wanted to do with my life, any interest I had in global health, and my proficiency with social media. I must have responded appropriately, because Dr. Bing, who has concurrent appointments at the Bush Institute and at SMU in the Simmons and Dedman College, accepted me on the spot. The reasons for my acceptance would only become apparent to me in time.

I had always been interested in global health. I knew that people were dying all over the world, but I thought that organizations gave money as aid, but during my first week I learned differently.

I was asked to help take notes at a meeting of global health experts from the US and Africa, at the Bush Institute, who were working with [Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon](#), a program to prevent and treat cervical and breast cancer in developing countries. During the meeting, I realized global health was more than providing money; it was about providing solutions that countries can sustain. For example, cervical cancer can be diagnosed with a simple drop of homemade vinegar and can be cured in the pre-cancerous stage by simply freezing it off like a wart. In fact, these sustainable practices are highlighted in the Bush Institute's inaugural book in global health co-

authored by Dr. Bing, [\*Pharmacy on a Bicycle: Innovative Solutions for Global Health and Poverty.\*](#)

*Pharmacy on a Bicycle* is about using innovative business solutions to take health care the last mile in getting treatment to people at a grass-root level. That's when I realized why I was here. Dr. Bing has selected me for an internship with his global health research group because he thought that I would be able to help get the message of *Pharmacy on a Bicycle*'s message out to young and emerging leaders using social media – an innovative way to get out a book about health innovations. As a young person I have had much more experience with social media than many people two or three times my age. I had also done some marketing work for other companies.

I learned that books for health are like medicine; they're only as helpful as the amount of people that have access to them. It was great to be able to use my previous experience and apply it to a real world problem. More than that, it was eye opening to realize that social media, something I, along with the rest of my generation, had grown up with, could be used to change global health. Facebook and Twitter were no longer just online toys that would be used to plan a weekend or chat with friends. Through my work at the Institute and SMU, I realized that I, as a high school student, was helping get a message out that might help save lives. Looking back on my summer, I feel lucky and privileged not only to learn about these real life issues but also to realize that even at my stage I could play an important role.

Now, I can write my college essays - and I have a lot to talk about.

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