

Wharton Global Health Volunteers Collaborates with Makunda Hospital to Assess High-Impact Care

Through the Wharton Global Health Volunteers (WGHV) organization, Wharton students have the opportunity to participate in service-oriented healthcare consulting projects. These projects allow students to use and develop their skill sets through experiential learning and impact healthcare in the developing world. During the spring semesters of 2019 and 2020, three WGHV teams worked with Makunda Christian Leprosy & General Hospital in Assam, India, (makunda.in). The teams developed an impact assessment of Makunda's work providing healthcare in a low-resource setting, created an impact rating system to score hospitals in low-resource settings based on impact potential, and analyzed Makunda's charity care practice to share best practices with high-impact hospitals in low-resource settings around the world.

Makunda Christian Leprosy & General Hospital



There is a shortage of care for patients in resource-poor populations such as that which Makunda Hospital serves. Most healthcare is out-of-pocket, and one hospital admission can leave a family in poverty. Providing healthcare to local residents in resource-poor settings can be challenging to do in a sustainable manner. Makunda Hospital has developed approaches to maintain sustainability in spite of seeing patients with limited resources, and, additionally, has created educational and agricultural businesses in the local community. The

hospital sees more than 100,000 outpatients, admits more than 13,000 inpatients, performs more than 5,000 inpatient procedures, and delivers over 5,000 babies each year.

Twenty-five years ago, the doctors responsible for reopening the hospital, Dr. Vijay Anand Ismavel and Dr. Ann Miriam, created a 30-year strategic plan, including phases of stability, local expansion, and distant impact. The third phase of the strategic plan is to develop and share best practices with organizations in low-resource settings. To support this phase, in 2019, the WGHV team was asked to conduct an impact assessment of the work done by the hospital thus far. In 2020, a second team was asked to develop an impact rating system to share best practices with other hospitals in similar settings.

Impact Assessment

Makunda Hospital has developed a unique model, the “Makunda Model,” that allows it to provide care to many outpatients and inpatients in need of healthcare services in a remote region of northeastern India. In order to evaluate the impact this model has had in the past 25 years, the team conducted an assessment that included: 1) observing Makunda's facilities and operational practices, 2) conducting in-depth interviews with Makunda employees, patients, community members, and competitive hospital administrators, and 3) analyzing financial documents and hospital statistics.

The team found that Makunda Hospital's focus on poor-centric strategies, cost management, and continuous improvement has enabled it to generate revenue and retain healthcare professionals in a way that leads to sustainable patient care. Pricing based on ability to pay, equality in services offered, mission-driven employees, and a culture of continuous process improvement have allowed for continued provision of quality care to the local population. The assessment described key areas of impact, takeaways for other hospitals in low-resource settings, and broader implications. The team furthermore suggested key areas to focus on during development of the next 30-year strategic plan.



Transformational Impact Rating System

In the neediest parts of the world, many hospitals face basic challenges similar to those faced by Makunda Hospital in its early days, such as lack of funding, running water, and electricity. Nevertheless, these hospitals often provide essential, life-saving services to their local communities. However, resources from government entities are often insufficient, and attracting the interest of donors and volunteers can be challenging and time-consuming. In the face of growing demand for their services, severe local constraints, and few patients who can pay for services, these vital hospitals may collapse for lack of external support as funding and volunteer resources dry up. When these hospitals cease to exist, the impact to the local communities they serve can be substantial.



To facilitate the connection between hospitals in low-resource areas with the financial and human resources that are critical to their survival, the second WGHV created the Transformational Impact Rating System (TIRS). Through research, expert interviews, and surveys, the team developed a rating system that scores hospitals on common variables related to regional impact potential, financial health, operational performance, external relations, and volunteer experience. Using TIRS, donors and volunteers can find hospitals with high impact potential where their donations and time will make the greatest difference – even

if these organizations are too small to be evaluated by the major charity rating sites. Furthermore, hospitals can use detailed information from their scores to identify areas in which they are performing well relative to their peers, and work on areas for improvement in order to increase their scores over time.

Charity Care Analysis

Makunda Hospital believes in providing comprehensive health services to all, especially the vulnerable populations who make up a significant portion of the surrounding communities. A “vulnerable” patient is one that runs the risk of falling into acute poverty after paying for health care services. Makunda Hospital has developed and refined a process for identifying such vulnerable patients for which they provide fully or partially subsidized care. Despite having very little outside funding (e.g., donations) and limited resources, Makunda Hospital consistently delivers charity care to all of its identified vulnerable patients and still remains profitable.

The third WGHV team studied Makunda’s charity policy and operations, identified opportunities for improvement, and documented Makunda’s process so that healthcare institutions across the world could learn from it. Through literature review, interviews with Makunda’s peer hospitals and staff, and onsite observations, the team worked closely with Makunda’s management team to develop ideas on how to effectively scale the hospital’s charity operations and lower false positive rates (i.e. patients who received charity care but did not need it). The team recommended Makunda standardize its charity policy training for its staff and refined its “socioeconomic and vulnerability patient assessment form” to be more quantitative. Makunda’s charity policy is truly unique and the team hopes that the paper will be helpful to other hospitals serving low socioeconomic status patient populations.



Reports

- The Makunda Model: A Study of High-Quality, Accessible Healthcare in Low-Resource Settings – [report](#)
- Impact Rating System for Hospitals in Low-Resource Settings – [report](#) and [scoring spreadsheet](#); see more at www.transformationalimpact.org
- Makunda Hospital Charity Process: Healthcare for those who need it most – [report](#)

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