

I am a firm believer in impact. Constructive or destructive; every interaction, experience, and moment leaves an impression. I believe small changes can transform into monumental moments and health education is the best driver of this effect. Throughout my career, inspired by my own experiences with poor health, I aim to influence positive change by improving health education programming and impacting health policy.

Growing up, I always wanted to be healthy but it rarely seemed to be in my cards. I was in a constant state of obscure infections and illness, until one day, I suffered from a condition that took over my functioning in an unprecedented way. In and out of neurologist offices and sleep clinics, I ended up with the diagnosis of night terrors, as an adult. The problem was evident but the solution was missing. There was no medication to instantly stop all of this from happening to me, but this condition was seeping into every area of my life.

At this moment, I began to approach health holistically. I picked up running, journaling, and dietary balance. Eventually, I started laughing again as joy became an increasingly present in my life. Like a baby discovering their toes for the first time, it seemed like the potential for a healthy life had always existed, just waiting to be noticed. My newfound health provided me with hope for a better future.

Like Thomas Coyle, I believe “he who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything”. I have seen the hope in Dominican girls, mothers at 13 years old, who discovered an ability to control their own reproductive health. These girls saw hope when my team advocated for them and their children through literacy programming. I have seen health bring hope in my professional experience while guiding survivors of violence toward a place of healing. This health and hope has ultimately improved quality of life in remarkable ways.

Although these experiences have primarily impacted an immediate sphere of influence, I continually aspire to expand my reach and breadth of knowledge by attending professional conferences and attaining organizational memberships. In June, through school funding, I had the opportunity to attend the Crimes Against Women virtual conference where I witnessed the synergy of multidisciplinary health teams addressing gaps in the field. In October, I presented at the 2020 American School Health Association virtual conference and sampled a heightened sense of professional comradery.

Through the relationships I formed with individuals around the country, the magic of collaboration began to bubble. It was the first time I truly felt connected to the heart of health education. I could see my role within the space while getting a pulse on real-time updates of innovations to come. Assistance through the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer scholarship could grant me an unbelievable privilege to continue to attend conferences, join professional organizations and actively influence health education.

With every decision people make to choose one direction over another, the outcomes of their choice cascade like dominos in every direction. I chose health education to help individuals make healthier choices and create better lives for themselves and the people around them. Ultimately, the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer scholarship could be the single moment which propels me forward in a meaningful career spent advancing health education.