



January 21, 2019

RE: Letter of Support for ME to WE Volunteer Trips

To Whom This May Concern,

It is no exaggeration to say that, as a doctor, one of the most memorable experiences of my medical career was the time I recently spent in Baraka Hospital in Kenya, working with the WE organization to treat patients and exchange knowledge with the local doctors in the community. What I loved about the ME to WE trip was that, although we helped to treat many patients, the program was not simply a hand out or short-term band-aid solution—it was structured in a way that enabled long-term, sustainable development of the local community and healthcare delivery system.

Doctors like myself often came from some of the most well-funded medical schools in the world. Considering this background, it was a privilege to work with experienced doctors in Kenya who had a wealth of talent, but had not always been able to access those same resources I did. The chance to learn from international doctors is a professional development opportunity afforded to all doctors in North America, and I strongly believe doctors in rural Kenya should be given the same learning opportunities in their career. Every doctor needs ongoing training in order to evolve and expand their skill-base, and we are incredibly fortunate to have such systems in place in North America. However, as you know, this is harder to accomplish in rural areas, especially given the pace of technology advancement. Giving doctors in North America the opportunity to share some of the latest advancements in the field of medicine with local doctors in rural Kenya will have an incredible impact on the quality of care that the patients in the rural community will receive. And as a result, it will significantly improve the quality of life of the whole community.

During my time practicing in Narok County, I learned far more than I'd first expected when I set off for Kenya. Although I was certainly able to share some of my own expertise with the doctors I worked alongside, it was more of a knowledge exchange, with both sides coming away having learned so much. The opportunity to learn side-by-side with many incredible doctors was one that I am tremendously thankful for. This was the definition of an equitable learning experience, and rather than focusing on short-term emergency aid, this program took a sustainable approach to healthcare and set communities up for long-term success. I know that it is often the case that foreign doctors fly into a country and exclusively deliver aid to patients directly, without any attempt at shared-learning. I chose WE's program because of their skilled global service approach and commitment to sustained development within communities – one doctor teaching many local doctors who can then pass this knowledge on to others in the community is an extremely efficient way to exponentially increase local capacity within the hospital.

Even more remarkable, not far from Baraka Hospital the new WE College is preparing to open its own school of medicine, which will be training young Kenyans to take up this mantle and

continue to provide quality care to the more than 30,000 patients who rely on WE's healthcare facilities and mobile health units in the region. The opportunity for Western doctors to teach the next generation of medical professionals in rural Kenya through this program will set communities up for true, long-term sustainable development in unprecedented ways, and I couldn't be more proud of my affiliation with WE.

I was thrilled to see similar programming across the board in WE's initiatives in the Maasai Mara. The WE College is training the next generation of Kenyan nurses and lab technicians. And this skills-based exchange goes far beyond healthcare. Student teachers from Canada are working in classrooms built by community members and WE. Agricultural experts are teaching best practices to local farmers, ensuring that their crops are as sustainable, nutritious, and drought-resistant as possible.

The experience was the ultimate skills-based exchange, and a true example of capacity building within local communities. Each day I worked at Baraka, I was able to meet the many people who rely on this facility face to face. From expectant mothers in the maternity ward to children coming in for their first-ever checkup, people rely on this work. Unfortunately, it's become commonplace for some North American's who have never experienced this programming to criticize it as aid that is simply driven by the west. This is a damaging opinion that simply doesn't reflect WE's work, and furthermore, undermines the agency of the communities that WE partners with who not only welcome these projects, but actively shape them and work to ensure they are sustainable. This is not a give and take relationship, but a true equitable partnership.

In summary, having witnessed and experienced the work of the WE organization first-hand, they have my full and utmost respect and support, and I cannot recommend them highly enough. Please do not hesitate to contact me personally if I can answer any questions or lend further support to this incredible and critical work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaushal M. Kulkarni', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kaushal M. Kulkarni, M.D.
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San Diego, California, USA