

MY JOURNEY AT EKLAVYA

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“Mental health problems don't define who you are. They are something you experience. You walk in the rain and you feel the rain, but you are not the rain.”
- Matt Haig, Author

Community mental health is a rapidly growing field within psychological support and wellbeing. Unlike clinical settings, which tend to emphasise individualised medical and therapeutic treatment, community psychology considers a more holistic approach, attempting to bring the community together and address the problems within themselves, by themselves. Awareness, prevention, and intervention are key concepts for educating the public and reducing stigma within the population.



At Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, I was formally introduced to the more practical side of community psychology. Despite having some prior experience working with community support groups in London, here I was able to see the inner workings and rationale behind such initiatives. I was not just a volunteer participating in the activities, but played an active role in defining them.

My internship experience at Eklavya has been extremely meaningful. From the very first day, I was welcomed by Vartak sir and Rutuja ma'am into a supportive and collaborative environment where I felt encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, and take initiative. I was able to have conversations with Vartak sir every day, and I could see the passion he has for his work. He spoke to me about the various programs of the Foundation, including the caregivers' and volunteers training program, Project Phoenix and Project Bahar. The atmosphere at Eklavya gave me the confidence to step outside of my comfort zone and challenge myself with new responsibilities, including delivering short impromptu talks. I was able to apply my research and communication skills to real-world situations, working on charts, literature reviews, and presentations that allowed me to contribute to the goals of the Foundation, which was both motivating and rewarding.

One of the aspects I found especially valuable was the constant guidance and feedback I received from everyone, particularly Vartak sir, Smita ma'am, and Rutuja ma'am. Their willingness to answer all my questions not only helped me complete my assigned tasks effectively and on time, but also gave me insights into how they think about problems in this field.

While I worked throughout the month on papers and research regarding the inner workings of other self-help models and designing a chart on the WHO pyramid framework for the organisation of mental health services, my capstone presentation was on advocating to mobilise recovered patients, caregivers, and lay volunteers to lead community-based initiatives to empower and engage the general public. I would like to thank all the staff and the other interns for their positive response and feedback towards the presentation. I would also like to thank Vartak sir for allowing me to represent the activities of the Foundation at the inauguration of a major collaboration with dignitaries of the Lions Club International.

Overall, my internship was a valuable chapter in my personal and professional growth. It gave me practical experience, helped me build meaningful connections, and shaped my professional identity in ways that will benefit me for years to come. I am grateful for the opportunities and the support I received along the way. This experience has not only strengthened my skills but also reinforced my confidence and excitement as I look forward to the next steps in my career journey. Wishing everyone at Eklavya all the best for their future projects and endeavours!

