

My project, 'Taboo: a Women's Health Education and Empowerment Initiative', aligns closely with my Program II (Immuno-Oncology: Ethics and Applications), which emphasizes patient-centered care and the integration of the medical humanities into the clinical practice of oncology. My Program II emphasizes the importance of empathy, cultural awareness, and patient stories in healthcare. This is especially important in contexts where medical decision-making can be heavily shaped by social and structural constraints. The goal of the Taboo project has been to address gaps in women's health education and empower women managing chronic illnesses in Karachi, Pakistan.

My project involved delivering four recorded virtual health education workshops in Urdu for women receiving care at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), a large-scale medical center with which I have worked for several years. While the workshops were initially planned to be live, due to technical difficulties, we pivoted to pre-recording workshops. I answered individual questions via video and email to maintain the interactive component of the workshops. We also opened the workshops up to male patients to promote inclusivity. My workshops focused on mental wellness, nutrition, personal hygiene, and chronic disease management, and were designed to be culturally sensitive, evidence-based, and accessible to participants with varying levels of health and digital literacy. In addition to the workshops, I developed and published a dedicated website on Wix that provides comprehensive women's health information in both Urdu and English, includes curated resource and hotline lists, and introduces a personal health tracking platform to support daily engagement with health practices. My workshops even resulted in the installation of a hand sanitizer stand in the dialysis ward's waiting area, which was very exciting.

This initiative contributed substantially to my academic and professional growth. Translating complex concepts into accessible language for my workshops strengthened my skills in health communication and patient education, which will be essential to my future career in cancer care and immuno-oncology. Recording personalized responses and drafting personalized emails to participants' questions added an interactive component to the virtual format and deepened my understanding of patient concerns, particularly around stigma, health and hygiene, and bodily autonomy. The experience of implementing a structured health education program also provided valuable exposure to program design, evaluation of participant engagement, and collaboration with healthcare professionals in an international setting. Collectively, these

outcomes reinforced my interdisciplinary training and clarified how ethical reflection, cultural context, and scientific knowledge intersect in real-world healthcare delivery.

As part of my contributions to promote the Program II community and its visibility, I am currently writing a two-part blog series to be shared with both the Program II community and the broader Duke community. The first blog post will reflect on the development of Taboo, its interdisciplinary foundations, and its grounding in immuno-oncology, ethics, and patient-centered care. My goal is to emphasize how my Program II background and the interdisciplinary foundation it has given me shaped my interest in developing an interdisciplinary health education program focused on a topic close to my heart. My second post will focus on the implementation process, challenges encountered, and lessons learned from conducting women's health education in a cross-cultural medical setting, with particular attention to ethical considerations, communication strategies, and the role of trust in patient engagement. Together, these contributions highlight the flexibility and applied potential of Program II projects and demonstrate how individualized study can translate into meaningful community impact.

Mentorship was a critical component of this project. My mentor, Ms. Naveeda Nizam, is a medical social worker at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation. Ms. Nizam supported the project by reviewing workshop materials to ensure cultural appropriateness and, most importantly, assisting with participant recruitment from the dialysis and oncology wards. Her guidance was instrumental in shaping the tone, content, and delivery of the workshops, as well as in navigating institutional logistics and patient engagement within the hospital setting.

This mentorship experience absolutely advanced my intellectual growth. Working closely with a medical social worker highlighted the essential roles that psychosocial support, ethics, and advocacy play in patient care. This is something I hope to emphasize in my interdisciplinary major and also as a practicing clinician. Ms. Nizam's perspective reinforced the importance of approaching healthcare holistically, particularly when working with vulnerable populations. Her support deepened my appreciation for the intersection of medicine, social work, and ethics, which has, as I mentioned, informed my future career goals. An email confirmation from Ms. Nizam acknowledging her mentorship role will be shared with you as documentation.

In terms of budget reconciliation, while my original proposed budget was \$2,000, I received \$1,500 in funding. Expenses included facilitating in-person sessions at SIUT with projector setup and technical support, covering Zoom-related logistics, and purchasing a domain

for the Taboo website. I am also currently working on a follow-up survey/feedback form for participants, which will require some of my funding as well.

In conclusion, Taboo was a meaningful extension of my Program II studies. The project strengthened my academic foundation, expanded my professional skillsets, and reaffirmed my commitment to ethical, patient-centered healthcare. It also served as the launching point for a longer-term initiative aimed at improving women's health education and agency. This experience will directly inform my senior capstone work and my future pursuits in cancer care, global health, and bioethics. I've included some images from my work below:





Breaking the Silence. Reclaiming Health.
Empowering Women.

Your Health, Your Power | آپ کی صحت، آپ کی طاقت

Empowering women with knowledge, care, and dignity for every stage of life.

خواتین کو زندگی کے ہر مرحلے کے لیے علم، دیکھ بھال اور وقار کے ساتھ باختیار بنانا۔

Body and Mind: Foundations of Women's Health | جسم اور دماغ: خواتین کی صحت کی بنیادیں۔

بنیادیں۔



New Health Entry

Date

11/14/2025

Energy Level (1-5)

3 - Medium

Mood

Okay

Symptoms

Irritability

Anxiety

Insomnia

Acne

Back pain

Breast tenderness

Mood swings

Bloating

Cramps

Nausea

Fatigue

Headache

Flow Intensity (optional)

Select flow intensity

Period Day (optional)

Day of cycle

Notes

...How are you feeling today? Any additional notes

ہر وقت

نریک

سکیکیں

ہوم

اردو

خواتین کی صحت اور بہبود

♥

ثقافتی طور پر حساس مدد

ہم پاکستانی خواتین کے منفرد صحت کے مسائل کو سمجھتے ہیں۔ ہمارا مواد اسلامی اقدار اور ثقافتی طریقوں کا احترام کرتے ہوئے طبی طور پر درست معلومات فراہم کرتا ہے۔

- برائوبی اور جانکا احترام
- ثقافتی طور پر مناسب صحت کی تعلیم
- انگریزی اور اردو میں دو لسانی مدد
- خاندانی حالات کی سمجھ

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سلسلہ دن

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پڑھے گئے مضامین

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صحت کے اقدامات

فوری اقدامات