

Advocating for NICU With Saul's Light

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When I resumed my internship with Saul's Light this fall, I helped with wrapping up the planning for our NICU Health & Equity Summit. Kimberly Novod, the Saul's Light executive director and founder, organized this summit to gather healthcare professionals, community organizers, and families to discuss their work, their experiences, and ways we can implement equitable care in Louisiana's NICUs (newborn intensive care units). Not long before I started working again with Saul's Light, the summit was changed from being in-person to virtual due to COVID. And

soon after, Hurricane Ida hit. Everyone had been altering plans for the new virtual format, and suddenly, we also had to worry about evacuating, not having power, or working with spotty wifi, or even all of the above. I actually wasn't able to attend the summit originally due to class conflicts. But an unexpected benefit of the hurricane and the academic calendar changes was that I was able to attend the entire summit and hear from all the amazing panelists. Despite everything that had happened and all the changes that had been made, the summit was very successful. I'm really proud of Kimberly, the panelists, and everyone that helped to organize this summit. I think it's incredibly significant that these people with different professions and experiences came together to discuss and learn about implementing proper care in our NICUs.

I learned a lot from the panelists about care in the NICU, and one thing that I found interesting was hearing about cultural humility. I don't think I had heard that phrase prior to the summit, but I had heard a lot about the importance of cultural competence in healthcare. Cultural competence refers to being able to understand other people's cultures and beliefs and having the skills and knowledge to interact with people of other cultures. The issue with promoting cultural competence is that it can suggest an idea of a hard goal where people can become culturally competent after completing a set of trainings or learning a finite amount of information. Cultural humility, on the other hand, is a lifelong process of learning and self-reflection around other people's and our own culture. Since it is a lifelong process, we can't really become fully competent in understanding all other cultures. Cultural humility emphasizes how we always have room to learn and grown, and people's cultures, identities, and experiences change over time.

I'm grateful that I was able to attend the summit and have a small part in helping with organizing it. The summit was back in September, and since then, I've been helping with preparing social media materials and gathering mental health resources. I honestly have not been very active in my internship this semester due to navigating the changes from Ida, balancing course work, and stress from life in general. However, I have still been enjoying my experience with Saul's Light and working with Kimberly, and I'm looking forward to our work in the spring.