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### **The Anders Scholarship**

The abrupt beeping sound of the flatline is still fresh in my mind. In 2021, my father took his last breath. I can still remember what I was doing that day. I was in my French class when I heard my name being called on the loudspeaker to come to the main office. There I met with my cousin who had come to pick up my sister and I. As we drove our way to the hospital, deep down I already knew what was happening. When we arrived at the hospital, I saw the weary face of my brother—one of the various healthcare workers taking care of my father—and my fears were confirmed. This happened during the ongoing Covid pandemic in October 2021. My brother—along with many other healthcare workers—had been working overtime and was exhausted. He usually didn't talk about his work during this time, but when I would ask him he wouldn't be exaggerating when he spoke about seeing the bodies pile up everyday. The stories were enough to despair me—I can't imagine having to live through that everyday.

You probably thought this would be a cheerful story about how my father overcame the odds and everything was alright, but like much of medicine, tragedy cannot always be avoided. Although this isn't the bright outcome I would've hoped for and many tears were shed, my appreciation for my brother and healthcare workers as a whole grew tremendously. I began to learn more about my brother's work, and what he experiences daily—from the positives to the tragic moments. What I learned only increased my appreciation.

Everyday, healthcare workers have to experience this uncertainty. This whole situation took a major toll on my brother especially. Despite his initial insistence that he "couldn't save his father", my brother is still a hero. His ability to continue showing up to his profession after

experiencing tragedies like this everyday inspires me to continue moving forward on my path, whether it's in my education or my own personal endeavors. Like many other health care workers, he was fueled by his strong desire to help people in life—an admirable trait. Whenever I come across any setbacks in my life, I remember how we were able to get through tragedy and that my setback is nothing compared to that.

Allied Health, Nursing, and Therapy professionals are the foundation of our healthcare system. Without their tireless effort to care, we would face many more tragedies. Often—whether it's in emergencies or everyday healthcare settings—these professionals put their own well-being at risk for the sake of the well-being of the community. I literally saw this in my own brother. For many months, his mental health took a toll. He suffered intense burnout. Unfortunately this isn't uncommon with other healthcare workers. From asking my brother about his personal experience, to doing my own research, it was made obvious to me. According to the CDC, “46% of health workers reported often feeling burned out in 2022, up from 32% in 2018” (Health). Unfortunately, the CDC also reported that “more than double the number of health workers reported harassment at work in 2022 than in 2018” (Health).

It's clear that we must assist our health care workers. They are the backbone of our community's well-being. To truly support them, we must advocate for better working conditions. This can be accomplished by providing an adequate staffing ratio and an environment where mental health could be supported. My brother tells me that the biggest challenge during work was the pressure from being understaffed. This leads to increased pressure and stress, which in turn affects mental health. Having increased staff can improve the workflow in a healthcare setting by allowing more delegation of certain tasks, leading to an efficient work environment where it should matter the most. Also, since staff wouldn't be overworked, they could function at

higher energy levels in an environment where they must make critical decisions constantly. To provide an environment where mental health could be improved, health care settings could provide more adequate and frequent rest breaks—which with a higher quantity of staff could be achieved. Healthier staff are efficient staff, which could offset any arguments that additional staff would cost more money. Counseling services should be a regular occurrence within these high stress environments. In addition to improving working conditions for health workers, acknowledging their hard efforts also goes a long way as well. By providing legitimate recognition through awards or acknowledgments, their morale can continue to be boosted. These are broad suggestions, but the point is to raise awareness of these options so that we can collectively take concrete steps for success.

Better healthcare starts with acknowledging and taking care of those who take care of us. Therefore, it is critical that we implement these suggestions to ensure they are taken care of as well. Allied Health, Nursing, and Therapy professionals are crucial for our society to function. By supporting and taking care of them, the entire community will be safer and healthier.

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### **Works Cited**

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