



# HASSAN MIRZA

## — 2012 Graduate

### ADVOCACY WORK INSPIRES LAWYER TO SWITCH TO HEALTHCARE

Ask Hassan Mirza about his path from law to healthcare advocacy, and he'll tell you it was a mistake. Serendipity, however, is a better descriptor — the kind of fortunate accident that puts a person in an unexpected place and on an unintended path. In Hassan's case, the catalyst was a scheduling conflict.

"I was working as an attorney reviewing work harassment claims, the employment side of healthcare," Hassan said. "Then I got the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to do some advocacy work. I was helping to connect people to social programs in D.C. to help them get better healthcare. I wasn't even the person targeted to go. They originally selected someone who went on paternity leave."

### FINDING A FUTURE IN HEALTHCARE OPERATIONS

To be able to improve patient care, Hassan first needed to develop an expert-level understanding of operations. He felt that in time his administrative mindset coupled with his desire to understand patients' needs would set him apart.

"I've worked in four major healthcare organizations, and you're not going to find too many people without specialized training getting into these higher roles," he said. "It all starts with operations, because I think healthcare has a business nucleus to it. One of our exercises was to improve wait times in the ER and patient satisfaction, and that comes out of operations."



## FROM CONNECTING PATIENTS TO CONNECTING FLIGHTS

Hassan's work in public advocacy sparked a voracious interest in the operational world of healthcare. It was the dramatic changes he'd see in patients' faces as they learned their ailments might be treated, or that their financial burdens would partially be lifted. He carried those memories back home with him to San Francisco.

"Everything I was doing from that point on was to be closer to healthcare. From the provider side to the patient side to the insurance side, I just wanted to learn more and be involved," he said. "I knew if I wanted to pursue my advocacy I had to be over there [D.C]."

After two years working in the Bay Area for Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest healthcare companies, Hassan took advantage of an opportunity to transfer to D.C. Being back in Washington inspired him to pursue leadership in healthcare full throttle, so he enrolled in the online Healthcare M.B.A. at the George Washington University.

## A MIRROR OF THE WORKING WORLD

Despite living just a two-minute walk from GW's campus at the time, Hassan chose the flexibility of the online program. Truthfully, he needed it. By juggling work, spending time with his wife, teaching part time, pursuing an M.B.A. and earning an additional doctorate degree to boot, he was a one-man master's class in time management. But the M.B.A. wasn't just a choice of convenience — it gave him the business acumen an M.H.A. couldn't, and the added reputation of the GW name.

"I know the strength and reputation of GW in the community and on a national level because I've lived and worked across the country," Hassan said. "The program is a mirror of what you are going to do when you're done, and I feel like everyone in the program was of the same mindset and caliber."

Restlessness for some hinders progress, but Hassan thrives on it. His M.B.A. and Ph.D. in Law and Policy with a healthcare concentration are impressive additions to the invaluable learning he has sought throughout his professional life. Today he continues to seek opportunities in healthcare that pique his interest and fuel his uncommon drive. Now, it's hard to imagine any of his future career moves will come by chance.

"Ironically enough, healthcare became my career. I'm glad it happened. But if I could change one thing it would be to enroll in this program much earlier than I did," he said.



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