



PATRICK O'DONNELL

**MEDICINE, 2006.
DELHI 2003 AND HAITI 2005**

Meet Patrick, one of the original recruits for the first UCDVO project to Delhi twenty years ago.

The inaugural expedition was spearheaded by Tony Coote, the founder of UCDVO, who at the time was a UCD chaplain and student advisor. In Delhi Tony had built up a relationship with a local NGO called the 'Society of Working Life' and was in search of a team to head to India. This is where Patrick's story begins.

"The whole thing was a total shot in the dark. Tony convinced us to take the leap and, without sounding too cringy, I'm glad I did because it was life-changing."

Patrick explained how in the early years there were no official training sessions on global engagement or workshops on Development Education but how it was very much in the heart and mindset of Tony and taught through his action and practice.

"I learned about advocacy and compassion from one of the best role models you could ask for."

Patrick was studying medicine at the time so his role in Delhi in 2003 and Haiti in 2005 was observing clinical practice and involved in running summer camps in schools.

"I knew I wasn't going to change the world, I just wanted to try and understand it better, and in fact I gained much more from the experience than I gave."

Most of the research, teaching and clinical work that Patrick does now is dealing with marginalised and excluded communities in Irish society.

"I provide care to people regardless of who they are or where they come from."

Alongside practising as a GP, Patrick lectures at the University of Limerick on topics such as the health of people who are homeless, addiction and providing health care to members of the Traveller community.

"I bring my students to those clinics because it's important they understand that everybody deserves to be treated fairly and with respect."

Patrick's experience with UCDVO and his work alongside Tony continues to strongly influence his teaching. He fosters a culture of curiosity, challenges stigma, and empowers a new generation of medical students to practise with compassion, kindness, and a strong commitment to equity.

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The experience stayed with me and has undoubtedly affected my career.



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