ABSTRACT

• Dr. Koshy started me down the path towards my final project idea. In his humanities class, I was assigned to interview and photograph an individual who was significantly impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Interviewing Mrs. Lake opened my eyes to the mental and physical suffering of Hurricane Harvey survivors. If I had more time, I would create a book similar to “Humans of New York,” but instead titled “Humans of Harvey.” The book would feature photographs and quotes from hurricane survivors like Mrs. Lake. A project like that could take a year or more to complete. I needed to do something more feasible. And then it occurred to me – I have been photographing Houston for years. Since moving to Houston for medical school in 2014, I used my artistic eye to capture some of the magnificent beauty of the city. For my final project, I decided to compile a series of my best original photographs highlighting the beauty, culture, and strength of the city.
• I am incredibly thankful to have inherited artistic talent. My maternal grandparents are both abstract and realist painters. My paternal grandmother practiced rosemaling, a type of Norwegian decorative painting on wood, for most of her life. I started out drawing horses as a child. By middle school, I was creating realistic drawings and paintings at a level above my peers. I entered multiple art contests and continued to fine-tune my skills throughout high school in advanced placement art classes. For the most part, I worked with colored pencils and acrylic paints to create quick, realistic pieces. In more recent years, I started to practice the art of photography.
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Shultz JM, Galea S. Mitigating the Mental and Physical Health Consequences of Hurricane Harvey. JAMA 2017; 318(15): 1437-1438.
Houston was devastated by Hurricane Harvey, but the murky floodwaters did not break her spirit. Though the citizens of Houston will have to cope with the long-term mental and physical health consequences of Hurricane Harvey, they can find strength in the resilient beauty of the city.
THE RESILIENT BEAUTY OF HOUSTON
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DISCUSSION AND EVIDENCE

- The physical health consequences of Hurricane Harvey included, but were not limited to, “mortality, primarily drowning deaths…and injuries including lacerations, puncture wounds, abrasions, fractures, and insect bites” (Shultz and Galea 2017). The overwhelming magnitude of Harvey's physical impacts was reflected in the dramatic increase in emergency department visits. Before Hurricane Harvey hit, “average daily freestanding emergency department (FSED) volume was 7-8 per day” (Pines 2018). When the hurricane struck, “average FSED visits rose to 11, peaking on August 30 at 18.5 per day (~125% over baseline)” (Pines 2018). Despite all this, the physical health sequelae were not the only obstacles faced by Houston residents.
DISCUSSION AND EVIDENCE

• Mental health needs become apparent in the aftermath of a disaster. Storms like Hurricane Harvey “leave physical and psychological destruction in their wake” (McCanlies et al 2018). After a calamitous maelstrom, “individuals often report feelings of depression” (McCanlies et al 2018). Houston evacuees were in desperate need of mental health care during the hurricane. At the George R. Brown Convention Center, “232 evacuees (age range, 4-89 years) sought mental health services” (Shah et al 2018). Unfortunately, the mental health issues brought about by Hurricane Harvey will likely be long-lasting.
CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

• As Hurricane Harvey slowly dissipated and the floodwaters receded, the sun finally set on Houston’s darkest hour. Some of my photographs attempt to capture the brilliance of the sun setting in Harris County. Incredibly, just a few weeks later, the Houston Astros won the world series. The city rose up from the ashes like a brilliant phoenix. The motto “HOUSTON STRONG” spread like wildfire across the region, giving residents new hope and motivation for rebuilding after the storm. Houston’s humanity showed her true colors as people came together to raise money, to take out drywall, and to provide safe places to stay. No storm can wash away the beauty of Houston.