

Banyan Treatment Centers Scholarship Sends Houston Nurse to Duke to Help Close Healthcare Equity Gap

Banyan's scholarship program supports cardiac ICU nurse Richard Qiu as he pursues a Duke Doctor of Nursing to expand care access.

HOUSTON, TX, UNITED STATES, July 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When Richard Qiu was

“

That realization- that geography, poverty, and culture can determine whether someone receives care for addiction or mental illness- has never left me.”

Richard Qiu

growing up in an immigrant household, he watched his relatives try to navigate a healthcare system that seemed built to keep them out. Language barriers meant they couldn't always understand their diagnosis. Limited health literacy meant they couldn't advocate for themselves. Work demands meant that even when they found a provider, they couldn't always make it to the appointment.

“I saw the quiet suffering that happens when a system treats access as a privilege rather than a right,” Qiu said.

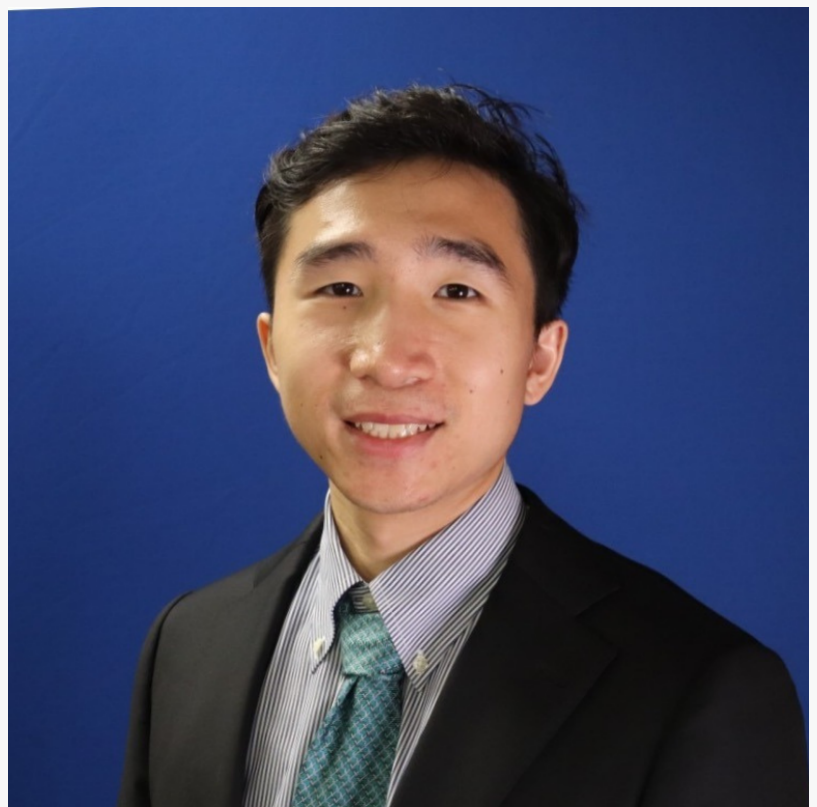
This fall, that experience is propelling him to one of the nation's top nursing programs. With the support of [Banyan Treatment Centers' Next Generation Healers Scholarship](#), Qiu has been accepted into Duke University School of Nursing's BSN-to-DNP Adult-Gerontology Nurse Practitioner-Acute Care program, where he will train to become an advanced practice provider focused on closing the equity gaps he witnessed firsthand.

Qiu, a first-generation immigrant who came to the United States at 18, is not new to the bedside. As a registered nurse on Houston Methodist's cardiac ICU step-down unit, he has cared for medically complex patients managing acute cardiovascular conditions. It was there that the patterns he recognized from his own family became impossible to ignore at scale: patients from non-English-speaking or low-income backgrounds were routinely discharged with self-management instructions they couldn't read, follow-up appointments they couldn't keep, and digital monitoring tools they didn't know how to use.

“The technology existed,” Qiu said, “but it was not reaching them.” That clinical observation drove his research. Qiu is the first author of a manuscript currently under review examining digital

health usage, privacy concerns, and health implications among Vietnamese Americans. He presented his findings at the 2025 Asian American Pacific Islander Nurses Association Conference, exploring how cultural distrust, language barriers, and limited digital literacy shape whether patients from immigrant communities engage with health technology at all.

But it wasn't only acute care where Qiu saw the system falling short. While volunteering with Bonton Farms and the Austin Street Center in Dallas, community organizations serving individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness, he saw how social determinants of health directly shaped who survived preventable conditions and who didn't. Mental health and addiction services, he observed, were especially scarce.



Richard Qiu, Banyan Treatment Center Scholarship Winner

"Patients I encountered often self-medicated because professional help was too costly, too far, or too culturally foreign to feel safe," Qiu said. "That realization, that geography, poverty, and culture can determine whether someone receives care for addiction or mental illness, has never left me."

It was that gap, between the care people needed and the care they could actually reach, that drew Qiu to Banyan Treatment Centers. The organization provides accessible, compassionate [behavioral healthcare](#) to individuals and families affected by substance use disorders and mental health conditions, with a particular focus on communities that face significant barriers to care. For Qiu, whose volunteer work had shown him how often addiction and mental illness go untreated in underserved communities, Banyan's mission was personal.

The Banyan Treatment Centers scholarship program supports aspiring healthcare professionals whose work reflects that same commitment, expanding access, reducing stigma, and meeting people where they are. When Qiu applied, it was the alignment between his experience and Banyan's values that made the match clear.

"Richard's story is exactly why this scholarship exists. At Banyan Treatment Centers, we believe that no one should be denied access to compassionate behavioral healthcare because of where

they come from, what language they speak, or what barriers stand in their way. Richard has lived in that reality, and he is building a career to change it. We are proud to support a future healthcare leader who shares our commitment to reaching the communities that are too often left behind.” John Sory CEO Banyan Treatment Centers

At Duke, Qiu plans to develop culturally adapted telehealth and remote monitoring protocols designed specifically for immigrant and underserved populations managing cardiovascular and chronic conditions. His long-term vision is to serve in a dual role: as a clinician treating medically complex and underserved patients and as an educator who trains the next generation of nurse practitioners to practice equitably.

“I do not want to simply treat illness,” Qiu said. “I want to change the conditions that allow it to go untreated. Banyan’s commitment to accessible, compassionate behavioral healthcare aligns with everything I am working toward, and I am committed to making this investment matter.”

About Banyan Treatment Centers

Banyan Treatment Centers is a nationally recognized behavioral healthcare organization providing accessible, compassionate treatment for individuals and families affected by substance use disorders and mental health conditions. Rooted in a mission to remove the barriers that prevent people from seeking help, Banyan serves diverse communities. With a focus on dignity, equity, and evidence-based care, Banyan Treatment Centers is committed to meeting people where they are and expanding access to the behavioral health services every community deserves. Learn more at banyantreatmentcenter.com

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