My family carries our share of illness. Recently, my grandfather passed away after struggling with Alzheimer's and my uncle suffered from a stroke but luckily survived and is recovering. We may not be blessed with perfect health but we are blessed with my uncle, a physician. Throughout my life I have seen all of my relatives ask for his medical opinion on health issues big or small and he has always lifted loads of worry off their shoulders. He did not fail to provide that same support and security when my uncle and grandfather became ill. He advised the family how to care for them and helped them whenever he had time. His knowledge and dedication in helping our family has left a strong impression upon me and has contributed to my certainty that becoming a physician is the right choice for me.

This path has not always been my sole desire. While my uncle strongly influenced me when I was younger, by the time I matriculated to Rice University I had fallen in love with physics. I was torn between a career in physics and one in medicine, so I continued to pursue my interest in both. I quickly got involved in physics research, exploring the physics of particle production and the characteristics of the quark-gluon plasma, the state of the universe at its earliest moments. By the end of my sophomore year, I was set to go to Switzerland to work at CERN for the summer and I was excited. It was the first time in my life I contributed to something with such an impact on humanity. It was transformative because it revealed what I truly wanted to pursue in my life.

Even though my work at CERN was successful and empowering, the pressures of academic work quickly occupied my mind after I returned. By the end of the following semester, I became exhausted and burnt out. None of my usual activities were able to revitalize me. Then one small event changed my whole perspective.

During a visit to my grandparents that semester, I stopped by a Taco Bell to grab a quick snack. Consumed by the burdens of problem sets and the upcoming final exams, I responded to a homeless man's request for some change without much consideration saying that I didn't have any on me. I bought some food and as I walked out the door, handed him the change. I was still thinking about all of the work I had to do, but I decided to look at my situation from an outside perspective to see if I could see something new. At that moment, I realized that I was entirely engrossed in my own world. I was worrying about academics so much that I had ignored someone who had problems that were much more fundamental than mine. The man without a roof over his head and barely a jacket to keep himself warm had almost slipped through my life and I had almost not given a second thought. I had everything he needed and a whole lot more yet I had shortsightedly felt I had so little. I went back and asked him if he had dinner. He shook his head. I told him I would pay for whatever he wanted, just pick his favorite. We shook hands and introduced ourselves; his name was Anthony. We ate together and I got to know about his life.

This small event unexpectedly recharged me and I was able to finish off the semester. I realized that throughout the semester I had tried to remind myself of my own achievements to try to reenergize me. I had gone to CERN after all and that must have meant something, but ultimately, the feeling of achievement was transient to me leaving not much behind. But, I found that helping those in need gave me more than just a push, it was a feeling of renewal that allowed me to continue doing what I needed to do. I realized whenever I helped someone through tutoring physics or buying dinner it was not about me, it was about them. I decided that I did not want to be in a situation where I focused on myself and that my career should be one where I have a direct hand in helping people and focusing on their worries. I decided I wanted to be a physician.

The following summer I participated in a medical physics internship at the MD Anderson Cancer Center where I saw radiation physics applied to treating patients with cancer. I observed patient treatments and ultimately shadowed a radiation oncologist. Witnessing the impact of the advances in medicine on the lives of patients has moved me and convinced me that my previous aspirations of becoming a physician were really what I wanted to follow. But I also want to contribute to the advances in medicine to improve everyone's lives. I enjoy research and the hunt to solve new problems. Furthermore, my love for physics and mathematics along with the technical skills in programming and data analysis that I have developed in research, allow me to uniquely contribute to medicine in this new era of computers and artificial intelligence. I want to become a physician-scientist to make the key advances to help everyone who is ill or will become ill, but I also want to learn their stories and build a relationship with those I help.