I was on a tour of the radiation oncology clinic at MD Anderson Cancer Center for my medical physics internship. Down the hall I could hear the beeping of linear accelerators as they ablated tumors with high-energy photons with very high precision. I could see patients exiting treatment rooms after they had received their radiation. I was surprised. They were laughing and joking with the technicians and most of them were walking out just fine on their own needing no assistance at all. If I did not know any better, I would not have suspected they were cancer patients. I thought to myself, "This is the power of physics".

I was exploring medical physics at the time because I was seeking to bridge a gap between two core interests, physics and impacting everyday human lives. In my four years studying physics, I excitedly learned about the fundamental phenomena of the universe and it even took me abroad to CERN where I contributed to one of the largest scientific collaborations in the world. But in my third year, I realized that a career in particle physics research did not excite me. It seemed isolated from the world because it was not clear how the direction of the field would motivate discoveries that would impact our everyday lives. Medical physics offered a combination that appeared to be a much better fit for me.

As part of the internship, I was allowed to observe radiation treatment procedures, but there was less patient interaction than I had hoped. I requested to shadow a radiation oncologist, and will never forget the miraculous treatment outcomes of one of the follow-up patients.

The physician pulled up the patient's pre-treatment CT scan from eighteen months ago. He pointed out that the lung cancer had metastasized with lesions up and down his mediastinum indicated by more than a dozen black spots on the scan. I suspected that the patient had passed away and he had brought it up as a case study. But then he surprised me, "Let's go check on him". I followed him to the exam room unsure of what to expect because I knew the chance of recurrence is high for widely metastasized cancers. The patient and his family greeted us with visibly tense smiles and the physician asked how their lives have been since the last visit. His lightheartedness and jovial personality were beginning to ease them. Then, he pulled up the patient's pre-treatment CT scan and one from earlier that day. We all let out a sigh, theirs in relief, mine in awe. His scan was clean and clear of the black spots besides a new one which they were monitoring but had not grown in size since the last visit. After we left the room, he explained to me that the patient was enrolled in an immunotherapy with concomitant radiation trial. I expressed my amazement and the physician reciprocated. He assured me that results like those did not occur often but that case shows the potential of the treatment protocol. I was curious about how this treatment worked so I asked him for literature on immunotherapy later that day. I was amazed that joining physics and medicine together had provided such a powerful weapon to save this man's life and I started to consider medicine as a career option.

In the following months, I continued to shadow him and observed the array of interpersonal skills that it takes to be a physician. I was amazed by his ability to console patients; some crying after receiving news of a suspicious spot on the CT scan, one fed up with backlogged procedures due to a bureaucratic error. I heard patients tell their stories and talk about the things that they wanted to do, things that they could do now that he made them cancer free. I realized that I wanted to do more than just make an impact on our everyday lives. Now, I wanted to be the person directly impacting people's lives; to give them hope and assurance in their time of need. But I was hesitant to leave behind particle physics research. I enjoyed writing analysis code and learning physics. I discussed my hesitation with the physician. He explained to me that I am in a unique position. Medicine is rapidly evolving with the quick improvements in technology of the recent decades. He assured me that if I pursued medicine, I could apply my honed problem solving and programming skills to improve medicine by continuing its integration with developing technologies. He encouraged me to become a physician-scientist and with my research background I would be able to make substantial discoveries. I reflected upon the opportunities that lay ahead of me and all hesitation disappeared.

As a physician, I want to do more than just heal sick patients. Like the physician I shadowed, I want to know them and give them the chance to live their life again. I want to explore medicine and apply my abilities to make discoveries that can impact more than just the relatively few patients that I will care for in my lifetime. I know I may not be able to save all of my patients but at least I can give all of them a fighting chance.