**Letter of Purpose (Ph.D. in Epidemiology)**

Understanding epidemiology is, to my mind, the key to unlocking opportunities for social change through the science and practice of medicine. The history of epidemiology tells of the immense contributions that Hippocrates, Pasteur, and many others have made in the past and present to shift our understanding of diseases, their spread and effective treatment and prophylaxis. The ability of modern societies to fight diseases is built by and large on the foundations of epidemiology.

Regrettably, epidemiological knowledge and related skills remain chronically lacking in the very disease- plagued societies of Africa that need them the most, resulting in excessive numbers of preventable deaths in these countries year after year. The scale and gravity of Africa’s deficit in the area of epidemiology became tragically evident recently during the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, an outbreak that threatened the entire region and created a major international health crisis. There is no question about that Africa needs to increase its supply and use of epidemiologists if we are to have a fighting chance against diseases like Ebola, malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, and HIV/AIDS.

Born and raised in the small Ghanaian village of Sibi, a place known, during much of my childhood, for its extraordinarily high guinea worm infection rate, I became fascinated with medicine at an early age when, during occasional or emergency visits with my mother to the nearest health post, the only persons I could see wearing a cheerful, healthy look and spotless uniforms were the doctors and nurses.

I was even more impressed by the fact that they also, despite their limited number, were the ones to whom all the patients looked for a solution or cure for their various ailments and diseases. As I progressed in my elementary and secondary education, I grew more and more curious and eager to know and acquire the kind of knowledge and training that made those doctors and nurses so special and useful to others. I knew that, with that knowledge and training, I could save many of the inhabitants of my childhood community from preventable diseases and avoidable death.

In 2016, I graduated from medical school from Novgorod State University in Russia and took time to reflect and ponder the next stage of my career in medicine. Upon weighing personal interest against social need, I was left in no doubt that the future, for me, lies in the advanced study and research in epidemiology and other aspects of public health. I applied for and gained admission into Saint Louis University’s master’s degree of public health in biostatistics and epidemiology. At Saint Louis University, I mastered the skills of epidemiology and biostatistics and learned how to use statistical software tools such as SAS, EXCEL, SPSS, R, and SQL. I worked as a graduate assistant at the biostatistics department where I collaborated on research publications and undertook independent research projects. Now, I hope to apply this knowledge in a Ph.D. program by learning how to model or map the outbreak of infectious diseases using Bayesian and Spatial statistics. With this skill, I hope to pursue my long-term goal of integrating my educational background in medicine, biostatistics and epidemiology, to help in the combat of infectious diseases in low-income countries.

Outside the classroom, I have volunteered as a mathematics tutor at Third-Baptist teaching low-income family kids in the community and, participated in conversations that foster diversity in Saint Louis. On April 22nd, 2017, I was part of a panel that engaged on the forum of African and African-American relations organized by Baobab people (a non-profit organization based in St. Louis which encourages diversity), with the aim of strengthening the relationship between African and African American communities in Saint Louis. In medical school, I seized various opportunities and initiatives to build a supportive community among fellow Ghanaians studying in Russia and to mobilize our collective energies for service. In 2014-2015, I was elected general secretary of National Union of Ghanaian students in Russia (NUGS-RUSSIA). In that capacity, I helped to promote cross-disciplinary intellectual dialogue and engagement among our members by organizing a series of interstate debate competitions on a wide range of policy and public issues. I also led a fundraising initiative that raised 69,000 rubles from our membership to support a Ghanaian student who needed surgery in Novgorod State to remove a tumor of the femoral bone. This experience deepened my awareness of the importance of having in place a system or institutions of mutual support and social welfare. Thus, in 2015, when I was elected vice president of NUGS-RUSSIA, I worked with the other executives of the union to set up a welfare fund for our student-members who may be faced with medical and other emergencies. As a volunteer for doctorsact Ghana, a charity organization that provides medical care and assistance to rural, underserved communities in Ghana, I joined the group’s 2014 summer project that treated more than 5000 patients in seven different communities.

I am applying to Brown University and its School of Public health because I would like nothing less than a first-rate education and training in my chosen field. In Brown University, I hope to find and join a community of scholars, researchers, and students, drawn from across the globe, whose diverse experiences and projects should help broaden and enrich my own, just as I, too, desire to share my unique experiences with them. With its reputation and record of developing global leadership, Brown University provides, for me, the ideal environment to further develop my abilities as a leader and researcher in furtherance of my long-range goal of using my training in medicine and public health to lead social and policy change in the fight against diseases in Africa and the global community at large.