

Mizzou Medical Student Personal Statement #5

Nearing the end of a long evening, I remember seeing a patient at MedZou, the student-run free clinic at MU, with severely debilitating peripheral arterial disease. He had lost his job because of the disease and had been living without reliable food or electricity, as he could not afford the diagnostic test that was needed for disability eligibility. At a follow up appointment a month later, one of the regular clinic attendings brought in a portable ultrasound for the necessary test. Seeing the confused look on my face, she told me that after some convincing, the Vascular Clinic manager had lent the device. This made an important impact on me; I had worked with many competent clinicians, but rarely with someone that appropriately challenged barriers and found real solutions for complex patients. I knew this was the type of physician I wanted to be.

As I carefully considered my future career over the past three years, I have consistently been drawn to the complexity and variety afforded through training in Internal Medicine – Pediatrics. Success in this challenging field requires determination, dedication, and compassion, qualities I have focused on developing in my training and life. Whether it is discussing care of a child with parents or having a difficult conversation about care limitations with someone at the end of their life, Med-Peds demands one to be flexible and compassionate.

Building my medical knowledge and skill has been a shared experience between myself and knowledgeable physicians, residents, nurses, and staff that I have worked with. Throughout my medical education I have worked with many patients that required of their physician more than medical knowledge. Understanding disease manifestations and treatment would be ineffective alone, with successful outcomes requiring a conscious effort to understand social circumstances and life experiences contributing to their disease course. Physicians that I admire most sincerely listen to patients' concerns and understand their perspectives. Learning from these physicians, I have tried to start all patient encounters with an attitude of humility and compassion. I believe that genuinely listening has greatly enhanced my ability to connect with patients, understand their true concerns, and gain their trust.

No discussion about my development as a person or physician would be complete without mentioning my desire to work with the underserved. Throughout college and medical school this has been an area upon which I have deliberately and passionately focused. A series of experiences during my undergraduate career led to the formation of a non-profit – *Fundacion Enciende Una Luz*. This organization, founded through a partnership of Dominicans and Americans, works to resolve health disparities and remove structural barriers to care in immigrant communities around La Romana, Dominican Republic. To date, this organization has developed educational materials, initiated a community health promoter program, and conducted malnutrition screening. Additionally, I help provide care to uninsured patients at our student-run free clinic, MedZou, which I have been actively participating in throughout my medical school career. These experiences have been instrumental in developing my understanding of the non-medical causation central to many illnesses. Importantly, they provide me with direction and focus for my future career.

Aligning with my values and goals, I seek to find a residency program that allows me to work with the underserved in a manner that strives to address the spectrum of problems and causes, medical or otherwise, associated with illness. I desire a community of individuals who work hard together and support each other throughout training. After residency, I hope to stay in academics and continue research regarding care in resource poor environments both at home and abroad. A career in Med-Peds will be challenging and rewarding, giving me opportunities to work with complex patients across the illness and age spectrum. I desire to be

a clinician that provides comprehensive medical care to children and adults while also assisting in the acquisition of resources they deem important to their health and happiness.