

Personal Statement

Like many other kids growing up right at the cusp of the modern technological boom, I was obsessed with various pieces of technology. My insatiable curiosity spanned from the newest gaming systems to desktops and smartphones. I loved to learn how each of these devices functioned and what they could do not only for me, but for others around me. Technology has allowed us to bridge gaps in our knowledge, observe diverse perspectives, and make the world feel much more accessible to anyone who could grasp the power of the internet. So why can't healthcare more effectively utilize technology to do the same?

Halfway through high school I began to visualize the complexities to that seemingly simple question when I started to pioneer my own path during an eye-opening shadowing experience with a local orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Vann. Aside from the captivating medical knowledge I learned in my short couple of observational months, I also gained a small semblance of what it was like being a black male physician. In my 16 years of existence, Dr. Vann was the first black physician I had ever seen, even after years of countless checkups and appointments at various hospitals and clinics. Such representation is truly important because of the sort of ease and reassurance I was able to feel after observing him gracefully maneuver through particular instances of microaggressions and unsubstantiated doubt he would receive from some of his own patients that his peers may have never encountered. I had been doing the same maneuvering for most of my life in daily interactions. Watching Dr. Vann not let those instances deter him from providing the absolute best care for his patients validated my own experiences and gave me a newly found desire to provide that level of care to people. I subsequently discovered that I truly connected with the interactions we had with each patient as we uncovered more about their personal lives, backgrounds, and circumstances in order to best assess how to treat them. Observing that holistic patient care approach prompted my pursuit of medicine, as I was able to tangibly observe how my inclination for listening, empathy, and problem-solving seemed uniquely fitted to advocating for people's health.

The summer after my sophomore year I earned a coveted opportunity to be a summer extern at MD Anderson Cancer Center and shadow two general oncological surgeons. I observed each surgeon for two weeks in their respective specialties and was astounded and inspired by the sheer degree of innovation physicians were implementing in order to provide improved outcomes and quality of life for patients. Advancements such as robotic surgeries simultaneously transcended my notions of what I thought to be technologically possible and motivated me to strive to contribute to future technological developments I could help to create. Such inventions could be used to improve the effectiveness of surgical procedures and reduce costs, thus ideally resulting in an increase in the availability of such life-saving surgeries for patients in underserved and underrepresented communities. This would require a concerted effort that perfectly aligns with my passion to bring awareness and availability of healthcare to these commonly overlooked populations, because I myself know what it feels like to sometimes be marginalized and unnoted.

The optimism and hope exuded by MD Anderson's patients was inspiring when they received their promising treatment plans because many had for so long been told a life-saving procedure would be impossible, too invasive or insufficient. However, the positivity displayed by patients was not solely a result of the cutting-edge medical advancements implemented, but also the quality of care delivered. Prior to this experience, I had never before had a nuanced perspective of how integral every member of the medical team was to the level of care experienced by a patient. Each volunteer, nurse, physician's assistant, surgeon, dietitian, pharmacist, and administrator had to work together in unison, trust, and respect to provide a streamlined experience and optimal care for the patient. Healthcare is undeniably a team effort. Such an undertaking requires everyone to act as building blocks, supporting one another in an effort to provide optimal treatment. I want to be a part of that intricate and cooperative structure as a physician, assisting those around me in improving the quality of life for all patients and giving people hope.

With the vast amount of the population owning smartphones and innovation proceeding more rapidly than anyone anticipated, the timing could not be better for my passions for technology, medicine and minimizing health disparities to converge and produce impactful solutions. My goal is to increase health awareness, availability, and accessibility for all patients, particularly those in underrepresented communities as I strive to practice inclusive, empathetic medicine.