

(Personal Statement): Explain your motivation to seek a career in MEDICINE. Be sure to include the value of your experiences that prepare you to be a physician. (5000 characters max)

Losing my father to stage IV brain cancer at the age of 16 was my first real exposure to medicine. My experience opened my eyes to a bigger picture: a world of death and fear that ran parallel to the world of prosperity and security that many were accustomed to. For me, cancer had seemingly robbed me of any future of normalcy. While the outcome devastated me, I couldn't help but feel grateful for the overwhelming care that my family received. I found myself longing to go back to the same hospital. The nurses had encouraged me during my most difficult time by reminding me that my story did not begin with "because" but "in spite of" losing my father. So, in spite of losing my father, I started volunteering at The Methodist Hospital. I witnessed the brevity of life and thus the value of preserving it. I quickly discovered that the world was full of seemingly hopeless situations, but having the daily opportunity to instill hope through a medical career became my lifelong ambition.

To gain further experience, I began to embark on a series of medical trips to Guatemala. During these three trips, I was struck by the stark contrast between the living standards there and that of the United States. In addition to the limited food, clean water, and protective footwear in Zapote, it was the absence of quality medical care that broke my heart the most. As our free clinic accompanied the only other clinic in the village, hundreds of people lined up each morning just to receive basic medical checkups and medicine. I was disheartened to see how common diseases like diabetes could result in loss of sensation, blindness, and even amputations due to lack of necessary resources and access to care. However, it simply placed a greater importance on the work we were doing that week. Along with gaining valuable shadowing experience, I oftentimes was permitted to conduct my own patient visits. By speaking to the patients in Spanish, I was able to make them feel as comfortable as possible. I obtained their medical and family histories, symptoms, and vital signs, meanwhile asking them simple questions like "How are you doing?" and "How was your day?" I realized that being an effective doctor meant more than just having the knowledge and ability to treat patients; it also encompassed the unique opportunity to cultivate personal relationships that invited patients to confide in the doctor comfortably beyond their medical illness. As a result, my passion for medicine grew exponentially in Zapote as I witnessed medicine's transformative power to imbue hope through genuine relationships.

These medical trips not only exposed me to the medical crisis in third world countries, but also enabled me to see the inequality of healthcare in my immediate community in Bryan, Texas. During my sophomore year at Texas A&M University, I shadowed at a prenatal clinic that also treated patients at the County jail. Oftentimes, pregnant inmates would attend their appointments in orange jumpsuits accompanied by security guards. Admittedly, it was easy for me to form preconceived judgments. However, these thoughts matured into genuine concern for the kind of environment they must face while incarcerated and their limited access to optimal prenatal care. When I expressed these concerns, the physician both stressed and exemplified the difference between "care" and "outcome." While the outcome was out of his control, it was truly remarkable how each patient interaction was so consistent. Some patients were 15-years old, and

some were over 40. Some came in with their first pregnancy, and others, with their 14th. Some were accompanied by a supportive partner while others came alone. No matter the difference, I learned that practicing unbiased care was imperative because physicians are responsible for treating all individuals equally, giving them the best chance at an ideal outcome. Consequently, it is this same attitude pervading into my day-to-day life which allows me to connect with and serve others on a deeper level. Moving forward, I am excited that practicing medicine will open the doors to serving people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, enabling me to have a wide sphere of influence throughout my career.

My experiences in Guatemala and underserved communities of Bryan, Texas continue to shape why I desired to be a doctor in the first place - to help the people that need medical care the most. From a young age, I understood that the medical environment can sometimes be distressing and bleak. Despite this reality, practicing medicine gives me an avenue to partake in the fight against disease and provide a beacon of hope for the afflicted and their loved ones. Complementing that hope is a compassionate and selfless attitude I hope to manifest in my interactions with patients and even coworkers in the future. (4869 characters)