

Sample Personal Statement #1

Years ago, I was involved in a junior version of the Rube Goldberg Competition. Participants in this annual national engineering contest work within a set of parameters to design the most creative device possible that accomplishes a basic task such as placing a ball into a cup. My team always did well. However, it is the countless hours spent brainstorming, exciting energy exchanges, and creative engineering solutions that I am most fond of. The exhilarating rush of working with a team to generate a detailed plan for a problem and adapting it as new challenges arose was indescribable. Even then, I knew that I wanted a career that recreated that “rush.” I found what I was looking for in Internal Medicine.

My fascination with Medicine began with my father. Over a decade ago, he suffered a “widow maker” heart attack. Thanks to the prompt medical care he received at the hands of skilled physicians, he survived. Since that day, I have curiously observed as my father’s physicians have worked to scientifically and strategically optimize his health. My father’s ongoing journey has been an inspiration for my career as well as my research interests. It has been a privilege applying the lessons I have learned from him about patient care to the care of my own patients. For instance, as a student, it is a powerful feeling to know that the trust you have forged with a shy twenty-two year old has freed him to speak candidly with you about his sexual history—particularly when the subsequent testing is diagnostically revealing. The full story of this young man’s HIV diagnosis highlights the dedication, teamwork, and professionalism necessary to effectively address the complexities in Medicine. Wielding a knowledge base of great breadth and depth, my residents and attendings in Medicine effortlessly addressed a multitude of medical and social issues with confidence and compassion. These are the physicians I want caring for my own father and the kind I aspire to become.

Communicating with my patients the fine points of their hospital course has been one of the most gratifying aspects of working clinically. In the research realm, I cherish opportunities to discuss with colleagues the details of my findings. Exchanging ideas on the unsolved mysteries underlying ischemia-reperfusion injury and therapeutic hypothermia evokes a visceral sensation that is identical to the thrill I discovered years earlier as a tennis instructor; dissecting and developing the techniques of novices over months and years as they evolve into budding tennis players has been incredibly rewarding. In the hospital, I have been able to achieve this same sense of satisfaction by working to enhance my patients’ awareness of their health problems. Coming from a family of teachers, it is the abundance of opportunities to teach, educate, and thereby impact the lives of others that draws me to the field of Internal Medicine.

It has been over ten years, but I still feel a surge of adrenaline when I reflect upon my Rube Goldberg days. The patience, dedication, optimism, and leadership that this humbling experience demanded are the same qualities that are exercised daily by my mentors in Medicine. After residency, I hope to pursue an academic career in which I can coach the next generation of physicians while continuing to research my interest in improving outcomes following cardiac arrest and resuscitation. It is invigorating to know that I am on the cusp of a career that will routinely recreate that Rube-Goldberg-“rush.” Thus, it is with great enthusiasm that I look ahead to my next chapter in training as a resident in Internal Medicine.