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Medical School Admission Essay

Having to run to the bathroom constantly can be very frustrating and worrisome, as I discovered as I continuously scoped out bathrooms everywhere I went during my sophomore year of college. After a several days of researching abdominal pain and bloody diarrhea and making multiple visits to my GI, a colonoscopy confirmed that I had ulcerative colitis spanning my entire colon. I was prescribed prednisone to decrease the inflammation but was refractory; later, I was put on Humira, which put me into remission after several gruesome months. The semester I was diagnosed, I was close to failing organic chemistry after being unable to utilize all of the resources offered by my professor both online and after class. Once my symptoms were under control, I repeated organic chemistry over the summer and improved my grade from a D- to an A+. Even though my health complications interfered with my academic plans at first, my strong willpower helped me succeed. While dealing with a chronic GI disease at nineteen years old was deeply stressful, it sparked my curiosity about the pathophysiology and treatment options for ulcerative colitis and many other illnesses. My fascination with incurable illnesses and their impact on patients and their families has stayed strong over my three years of medical school. I appreciate how my experience with ulcerative colitis enables me to empathize with patients fighting the many physical and mental illnesses without a definite cure.

My interest in psychiatry sparked during my third year on clinical rotations. During my psychiatry clerkship, I took care of a disheveled, middle aged woman. Her paranoia was so extreme that she could not speak or look at anyone. She spent most of the day sleeping and often needed to be put into isolation. Several weeks later, on the last day of my psychiatry clerkship, I bumped into a well-dressed, confident, and personable woman. Before I had a chance to say anything, she greeted me with, "Hello, doctor. How are you doing today? Do you remember me?" I was truly speechless as I saw this woman who had been transformed into a self-assured individual who was ready to take on the world. At that moment, I knew that no matter what role I had played in this lady's transformation, I wanted to be a part of the process that made it possible. It is a unique opportunity to look into one's personal narrative and private feelings; it is an even greater privilege to utilize that insight to harness the power of the human brain and help it heal. Throughout my third-year clerkships, I saw how psychiatry differed greatly from other fields because I never forgot that the patient was a person. Through the fine tuning of medication, psychotherapy, and, most importantly, the patient's emotional state and hard work, doctors are able to prevent and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. No other major organ system can be reshaped by the power of words.

The most rewarding aspect of my clerkship was working one-on-one with the children in an inpatient setting, where I was able to form meaningful connections with them. Through sessions and group therapy, I witnessed their progression from kids who were unable to make eye contact into social, enthusiastic individuals ready to smile and talk about their day. In psychiatry, it is important to use those deeper level connections and personal narratives since it is not a "one size fits all" approach. It was very difficult for me to leave them without knowing what happened to them. Although many doctors do not get to know what happens to their patients in the end, psychiatry is truly about helping patients through a journey to treatment and seeing them from beginning to end. This is an element that I really appreciated. The psychiatrists with whom I worked were making dramatic differences in a population that is often overlooked, undeserved, and stigmatized. This is exactly what I yearn to do.

My empathy for my patients is also evident toward my classmates and medical colleagues, for I recognize that residency is one of the most difficult and demanding times during anyone's medical career. Everyone faces hardships along the way and it is important to work as a team. Whether studying in groups or working collaboratively on any case, I will share my effective communication skills, respect and genuine support for my peers. My curiosity, compassion, dedication, and readiness to advocate for my patients will guide me during my psychiatry residency and in practice.

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