

PERSONAL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

SAMPLE #5

My story with medicine begins with memories of frequent hospital trips. I remember the intense panic instilled in my parents. The hurried search for my shoes and jacket, the loud prayers, the frantic trips to the ER, and fear of the unknown. My younger sister suffered from what I now know was epilepsy. Back then, however, my family and I didn't understand much of what was happening as we were recent immigrants with little English. Nobody could offer any verbal information that could ease our minds or help us understand. What they could offer was consolation through their actions, smiles, and understanding. No words necessary. Those men and women knew what needed to be done for my sister and were doing it without hesitation. I wanted to be like those doctors I had seen. I wanted to have the knowledge and skills to confidently take over the care of my patients and provide them with the best possible treatment.

I am a first-generation college graduate and an Italian-Albanian immigrant. My hope is to continue a legacy my family in Albania once had in the medical field. They were physicians and nurses that worked with a passion for medicine and saving lives. The same opportunity for education, unfortunately, did not extend to my parent's generation due to a dictatorship ruling at the time. My oldest aunt, having the top grades in her class, requested government permission to realize her dream of studying medicine and was denied as medical school spots were given to those with political power. I am so fortunate to live in a country where I now have the opportunity to be anything I want, provided I put in the dedication and work. Being an immigrant has often carried with it the burdens of discrimination and unequal opportunities, however, thanks to my family and dedication my educational ambitions became reality. My experience as a first-generation student has offered me a unique perspective on how to connect with others, particularly in medical environments. Through shadowing physicians in my birth place or my thesis research surrounding physician-patient communication across countries, I am able to link some of these experiences and knowledge to medicine.

Over the years I have worked towards my medical aspirations with a full passion, determined to incorporate my experiences and knowledge into every moment with patients. I clearly remember one of our patients, Ms. M, sitting across from me as I took her past medical history, and the moment she looked down at the floor ashamed. I have spent the past five years working as a medical assistant for an ENT specialist. Ms. M shared her struggle with me after I made her feel more comfortable throughout the duration of the visit. She related her initial hesitation in mentioning her mental illness as she felt "people look at me differently." This was one of the most profound experiences I have had with a patient as I truly realized the courage it takes to open up to the medical staff in such a personal way. Patients make themselves completely vulnerable to us in hopes that we will be able to use that information to provide them the best possible care. This was just as my family had put our blind trust in to the medical staff those nights for my sister.

Learning about people and their cultures has always been a great joy of mine. Through medical volunteering and work, I have come across and learned from many diverse people and backgrounds but have also noticed disparities in healthcare, particularly in underserved communities. Having worked and volunteered in different locations including Detroit, Dearborn, Waterford, and Pontiac, I continue to see concerns, but moreover many similarities, most strikingly the way patients put their trust into physicians and strive for better health. Nothing demonstrated this to me more than the walk I witnessed patients make in Salales, Nicaragua. Walks of two hours on foot by some, as they came and waited hours in line at our three-day clinic with nothing but better health in mind for their loved ones. They were one hundred percent

committed to following the instructions of the medical staff without hesitation. My heart was touched and my eyes were opened to the greatness that can be accomplished through teamwork and a desire for better health. I learned so much about the rich and beautiful culture of Nicaragua and how medicine differs throughout the world. Those days, our differences didn't matter, our goal for better health united us with the community.