

Medical school is not easy. To describe the experience merely as 'stressful' would be a gross understatement. Often I cavalierly joke that a part of me died during the rigors of that first year. Furthermore, as I stand on the threshold of a career in medicine the future fails to appear any more optimistic. All too often, it seems that the lofty ideals which have become cliché in med-school applications are lost somewhere along the way. So as I sit here, reviewing my original personal statement, I am forced to examine whether I am as motivated as I was prior to the stressors of medical school. Thankfully I can say that I am. If anything, my passion for people has grown/matured.

*"Don't loose your heart" Traudle, friend & neighbor*

Traudle is an older, divorced, eccentric German woman who was my neighbor for six years and the inspiration for my original personal statement. I affectionately refer to her as my 'first patient' but it would be more accurate to call her my 'first medical professor.' During the winter of my sophomore year at K-State, Traudle suffered a severely broken wrist and I was by her side from the first ER visit, to surgery and through months of rehab. Initially, she taught me what it meant to be a patient, complete with the inherit joys, sorrows, and frustrations that one would expect. However, now I reflect on what Traudle can teach me about what it means to be a physician. The Traudle that is my neighbor is a warm, kind, hard-working woman with an 'old country' view of the world. The Traudle that could walk into my clinic is a nervous, minimally educated, untrusting patient that would show up late, stay too long, and monopolize my time. Understanding this dichotomy reminds me that even difficult patients may be good people who are uncomfortable in a stressful medical environment.

*"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" Proverbs*

Very early into my third year, I was rotating through Psych Consult and was asked to speak with a 45 year old woman for possible depression. I can't help but think that my lack of clinical skill was as obvious as the nose on my face. However, I learned a warm smile and a sympathetic ear can be surprisingly therapeutic. After two days and several hours of discussion, this patient felt comfortable enough with me to reveal for the first time ever that she had been extensively molested as a child. This was a truly profound experience that emphasized that the ability to communicate with people is the essence of the art of medicine.

*"Doctors who tell jokes in the chemo room are beautiful" Sharon Blynn, Cancer Survivor*

This quote epitomizes the type of physician that I see myself becoming. I am very proud of my sense of humor and I can't imagine practicing medicine, the most intimate of careers, without using humor to bond with my patients. Undoubtedly, there is an art to the use of humor in medical situations, but when used properly it can have a profound effect on all involved. The most emotionally rewarding experiences of my training came from those times when humor allowed me to connect with patients as well as ease their hearts and minds.

I'm not naïve; I read the near daily articles preaching the woes of primary care physicians. I'm painfully aware of the declining interest in family medicine, pitiful reimbursement, and the looming extinction of the solo practitioner. I'd be a fool if I didn't ask myself why I would volunteer for a specialty wrought with such difficulties. Simply, my answer is 'the people.' I am wholly willing to sacrifice the perceived financial and personal perks of another specialty in exchange for the intimate experience of my patients. Additionally, I believe that the future of family medicine is brighter than forecasted and I look forward to being actively involved in its revitalization.

