

Medical School- Personal Statement

Prompt: Use this section to compose a personal essay explaining why you selected the field of medicine, what motivates you to learn more about medicine, any pertinent information about you not included elsewhere in the application, special hardships or experiences that have influenced your educational pursuits and commentary on significant fluctuations in your academic record not explained in the application.

In late 2004, a tsunami hit my life, both literally and figuratively. Completely unprepared, my town had been held ransom by the rampaging waves that would later be referred to as the "Christmas tsunami." I watched in disbelief, as the waters engulfed the streets I had played on only the day before. The once boisterous classrooms, market place and neighborhoods quieted. The crisis was real and immediate. The fear of epidemics and the lack of clean water made us leave the town and move inland. When I returned nearly a month later, the stench of loss was overwhelming. The public health crisis had been avoided, thanks to the government distribution of bottled water, but the emotional and physical scars remained. Some of the initial estimates reported that my town, Nagapattinam, was the worst affected in India. In the months following, I took part in and witnessed the difficult process of rebuilding. I would analyze these days many years later. Moments would stand out. Moments of courage, resilience and hope would remain with me. I would remember the NGOs and health care professionals, who offered a hand when my town needed it the most, and be inspired. I would reflect on the determination of my town to get back up and the people along the way who made it possible by providing health care, housing and support. I would hear from those who had stayed behind, about those initial days of water and clothes distribution. The tsunami has taught me a very important lesson in human resilience, and it also marks the beginning of my inspired journey. The catastrophic events of the tsunami and witnessing the help provided by volunteers, health care professionals and NGOs has instilled a need in me to help others.

This journey was shaped and guided towards the field of medicine by events that occurred in the months prior to the tsunami. My grandmother had been rushed to the town hospital after a heart attack. The fear of losing her was strong and my entire family was distraught. The physician, after stabilizing my grandmother, came into the waiting room and talked to us. He instilled hope both with his words and calm demeanor. He told us about what was happening and the procedures they were planning on doing. The nurse at the ICU that night was also understanding and helpful. She, in between switching out IV bags and checking vitals, also regaled us with interesting stories from her life, in an attempt to distract and cheer us up. This event together with the tsunami, merely months later, provided the initial push towards medicine.

To further explore this inclination towards medicine, I volunteered at a local free clinic in Delaware, Ohio. I later was an intern in the pediatric unit at Jupiter Hospital, Mumbai, in 2011. I alternated between the pediatric ICU and the outpatient department at the hospital. During my month at Jupiter Hospital, I got to interact with the children there and also their worried parents. At one point, I pretended to be a secret agent, in order to convince a 5 year old to eat his food. Some days were tougher than others though. I had to help a scared child through a dialysis procedure and prepared an anxious girl for surgery. Apart from helping out, I also shadowed a doctor and got to see his interactions with the patients. He spoke to the children as if he was their age, telling jokes and at the same time getting valuable information about their symptoms.

Watching him put the symptoms together and come up with a plausible diagnosis was astonishing. Overall, it was an eye opening experience and furthered my passion for medicine.

Last semester I volunteered at the emergency department in Grady Memory Hospital, Ohio. During one of my shifts in the ER, there was a patient who feared needles, but unfortunately needed to get stitches on his thumb. As an intern, I was asked to watch the procedure. Sensing his anxiety, I began asking him questions and learned that the gash on his thumb was due to an archery mishap. Having taken archery lessons myself, I told him stories about my archery experience. We talked about the specifics of different bow types and how to make them, during the entire length of the procedure. I kept him engaged and distracted him, much like the nurse in the ICU had distracted me, nearly a decade ago.

My love and aptitude for science has also helped propel my journey. From a young age, I have had a propensity to ask questions. This inclination to question eventually led to my interest in research. I enjoy working in the lab, designing experiments, formulating hypotheses and analyzing results. More importantly, working in labs and doing research has allowed me to get a more, comprehensive view of the medical field. I am currently working in Dr. Dupont and Dr. Jiang's lab on a project about infectious diarrhea and fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT). I have been able to see how research translates into potential treatments.

As I continue to delve further and experience more of the medical field, my love for the profession has only increased. After every day in the ER or pediatric OPD, I had a sense of belonging and every patient interaction strengthened this feeling. This journey began nearly 10 years ago and now I am excited and prepared to start the next leg of the journey.