

Sample Personal Statement #1

At the young age of five I had my first introduction to the field of medicine. At the time, my father was a radiological technician at the local hospital. If my father was on call for the radiology department and my mother was also working, he had but no choice to bring me to the hospital when called. I clearly recall being intrigued by the real skeleton that hung in the office. It excited me to watch the X-ray slides come out of a machine and yet show human bones. I also remember seeing a patient being wheeled by with a bone protruding from his leg. This was the first medically-related experience that I recall. Throughout my childhood, I was exposed to similar situations. As I became older, it was out of curiosity, and not necessity, that I went to work with my father.

My first opportunity to personally interact with patients was as a high school volunteer at the skilled nursing facility at Little Falls Hospital. The first day that I stepped onto the floor, the smells and sights of the deterioration which aging causes overwhelmed me, and I questioned whether I was meant for this line of work. My perspective immediately changed as I actually interacted with the patients. Whether transporting patients or attending to their needs, I noticed that many of the elderly people avoided eye contact and did not speak unless necessary. It became a challenge for me to overcome this barrier. Over the next year, I visited the patients on a weekly basis. Surprisingly, many people began looking forward to seeing me.

One experience that occurred at the nursing facility and had a significant impact on my life involved observing the interaction between the patients and the nurses. Several of the nurses spoke to and treated the elderly in a dehumanizing manner which I found extremely disturbing. As I left, I began crying. I learned that not all health care workers

truly care for the patients. Instead, they simply view their work as a job. In addition to exposing myself to the medical needs of the elderly population and the special care they required, I recognized that sensitivity and compassion are as integral to health care delivery as is medical knowledge. In college, I have continued to volunteer at Eddy Senior Care in Schenectady and realize that it is in my nature to assist others in need, both physically and emotionally.

In response to my desire to gain more knowledge about the medical profession, I have volunteered in various other positions. I was fortunate enough to have been able to spend my college breaks at Little Falls Hospital's OR- standing side by side with operating physicians. The intense and critical nature of the medical atmosphere has broadened my perspective as to the characteristics and qualifications that physicians most possess. I realized that most every decision made by the doctors is critical to the life of the patient. The intensity and decisiveness with which the physician must respond, is not only appealing to me, but is characteristic of my personality. I like responding to challenges.

This past summer as an AmeriCorps volunteer, I was challenged to improve the reading skills of a group of economically disadvantaged children. As a pre-medical student, I initially felt out of my league since the other volunteers were graduate education students. I was responsible for designing a summer reading program for fifteen children, ages five to nine and implementing my program at the Little Falls YMCA where the children were daily. I encountered many obstacles such as what material would be appropriate for each child, children who announced their dislike for reading, and the struggles of instituting a daily lesson. Despite these factors and my unfamiliar setting, I

began to feel confident in myself as I thought of new projects to get the children to enjoy the program. Also, several of the children needed emotional support in addition to assistance with their reading, and a personal factor evolved in my relationship with the children. By the end of the summer, I felt that my program was successful since each child had shown interest and improvement in reading. I value this experience for various reasons. I feel that reading is fundamental to education and all children should have an opportunity to excel. Additionally, I feel fortunate to have been able to work with young children and anticipate that these relationships will further prepare me in dealing with a wide range of patients as a primary care physician.

I also believe that motivation is key for a successful career as a physician. I consider myself to be a highly motivated individual. Being the eldest of four children, with parents of modest means, financial constraints were evident to me from a young age. My parents instilled in me the value of strong work ethic and the responsibilities that one needs to incur to facilitate their dreams, goals, and motivations. As a result, when I have a goal to reach, I dedicate myself to achieving the task. This extends to my aspiration to be a physician. I feel that as an intellectually and emotionally capable individual, I have a calling to dedicate myself to helping others.

Personal Statement #2

I perceive myself to be a person with numerous interests and a range of skills which could have sent me in any number of career directions. Yet, through my experiences over the past three years, I have realized that becoming a physician will afford me the opportunity to utilize these skills and challenge many of my interests.

Growing up with a physician in the house understandably sparked an early interest in medicine. I was fortunate to experience the various situations that arise in the life of a doctor; the good and the not so good. However, the first time I seriously thought about committing myself to the field of medicine was when I had to decide whether or not to apply to a combined B.A./M.D. Program. I chose not to bind myself without further exploration and thought. Accordingly, I elected to attend a liberal arts college where I could pursue my interests in both the social and physical sciences.

During my college breaks, I had the opportunity to shadow my father and some of his colleagues as they interacted with patients. This experience exposed me to the fields of internal medicine, gastroenterology, cardiology, radiology, and pathology. The times I spent with these doctors poignantly reinforced what I had previously only heard my father talk about. I was excited by their ability to help people and affect their lives. In addition, each patient brought a new challenge, a new mystery to solve, and a new chance to learn about oneself and the field of medicine.

I have also learned, firsthand through my father, the ramifications of the changing healthcare field. My father spearheads his multi-specialty group's efforts in dealing with managed care and public health issues. During my two summer internships in the Mayor's Office for the City of Pittsfield, MA, I worked with a non-profit foundation on

programs to enhance the success of the annual city immunization effort and to increase the accessibility to preventative medicine amongst the lower socio-economic citizens of Pittsfield. In addition, my intern responsibilities included writing the annual reports for 1994 and 1995, as well as revising the City Employee's Handbook. These tasks familiarized me with the healthcare benefits provided to both Pittsfield's citizens and city employees. I have found these issues intriguing and project possibly in the future combining the challenges of medical practice with administrative responsibilities. In this way, I would use my leadership skills and my organizational interest to help my fellow physicians and my patients manage the realities of population-oriented medicine.

One of my greatest strengths is my interpersonal skills. I have always enjoyed interacting with people. I consider myself a very good listener. Moreover, I believe I possess the ability to express my viewpoint effectively while communicating a respect for the concern of others. I also enjoy facilitating conflict resolution. These interests stimulated my becoming involved in peer counseling and student government on the high school level, and culminated, in college, with my election as a student representative to the Board of Trustees of Union College. This position has proven to be both challenging and enjoyable.

Another aspect of medicine I have had the opportunity to experience this summer is working as a research student at the National Cancer Institute. This has exposed me to the realm of biomedical research. Not only have I found my research fascinating, but, in addition, I have observed the sociological side to biomedical research and learned how bench research correlates with clinical medicine.

I have enjoyed my opportunities to observe the diversity of medicine. At this point, what appeals to me most is the opportunity to interact with, be responsible for, and to care for a group of people on a long term basis in a primary care role. I believe my scientific strengths and my interpersonal skills would enable me to be a competent and caring physician.

Personal Statement #3

“The miracle of immigration, the challenge of a new beginning in America, and the opportunity for a medical education is deserving of my lifelong commitment and dedication.”

I was born in the former Soviet Union and lived there until age 15, when my family made the decision to move to the United States. My initial interest in medicine began very early, at age 7, when I observed that my grandfather, who lived with us, was ill with cancer and I felt the constant need to help him in whatever way I could. My curiosity about the field of medicine intensified a few years later when, as a preadolescent, I occasionally visited my mother, an Internist, at her hospital worksite, and was permitted to sit in the house staff room where the physicians would congregate after medical rounds. I listened intently to their stimulating conversation and marveled at their ability to reach a diagnosis. Having personally witnessed the interaction between physician and patient, I somehow realized the magnitude of the physician/patient relationship as it related to the patient's health care and sense of well-being. My career choice to pursue medicine was made!

The actual move to the United States at the end of 1989 was the great turning point of my dream. I observed the extraordinary challenge my mother faced in America when, after 15 years of practice as a medical doctor in Russia, she overcame the difficulties of conquering the English language, qualifying for the Medical Boards, and entering a medical residency. My exposure to her unfailing determination and long, hard days and nights of study helped me to discover we were cut from the same pattern.

Once we settled in Schenectady, I quickly learned the English language, adapted to the new culture and made new friends. For two years, 1992-1993, I volunteered at the Skilled Nursing Unit of a local hospital and found it to be a gratifying experience, as I gained pleasure in providing socialization to the patients in an empathic manner.

As a Chemistry major at Union College, I am gaining a solid foundation for entry into medical school. My studies, research projects and extra-curricular activities are clearly increasing my scientific knowledge. As a result of my chemistry award, I obtained a Research Assistant position for summer 1995, and worked on a project entitled "Kinetics and Mechanisms of Organometallic Compounds Important in Photocatalysis." I will continue to work on this project during the summer of 1996 and through my senior year. This research work enables me to perform experiments independently based on my previous findings, and utilizes my understanding of math, physics, and chemistry in interpreting data. Another valuable learning experience occurred in 1996 with a 10-week course entitled "Health Care Practicum." This course included clinical rotations at a local hospital where I observed varied medical procedures, and was allowed some routine hands-on experience under supervision.

My participation in two off-campus projects have been particularly gratifying: "Outreach Program," in which I visit elementary and middle schools and introduce children to the subject of chemistry by demonstrating simple experiments and permitting hands-on experience (1995-96), and the COMPAS Program at a local elementary school in which I assist students with remedial math, reading, and writing (1994-present). I also became involved in community service as a volunteer with the Schenectady Big Brothers/Big Sisters during 1995, working with underprivileged youth. All of the above

experiences required effective communication and teaching skills, enhancing my awareness in the art of human communication and strengthening my confidence in my ability to relate to a diverse, multicultural population.

My course of study and continuing involvement in research, medically-related activities and volunteer service only serve to further enrich and fuel my desire to succeed in my goal to become either a family practice physician or specialize in internal medicine. In this endeavor, the combination of my intellectual pursuits, thirst for medical knowledge, along with my genuine concern for people can be satisfied in making a meaningful contribution to the health and welfare of mankind. With a unique background and new life in a society which recognizes and rewards hard work, conscientiousness, and diligence, I would feel privileged to receive a medical education at your institution.