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Plans for the Future

There are two types of people in the world: ones who can “go with the flow” and ones that always need a plan. I’m the latter. To me, doing something without a plan is too uncomfortable, so I always make one. This is a part of my personality that is completely dominant; I cannot shake it, no matter how hard I try. So, I decided at a very young age that I knew what my life path was going to be. Surprisingly, that path has not yet changed as everyone told me it would, so I want to share how I got to the place where I am today, and what my future aspirations are.

When I was younger, I had this idea in my mind that I was going to be a doctor. Without any rhyme or reason, I decided that this was my plan. I would get through high school, go to college, and then of course attend medical school. In my mind, this was simple. But, then I grew up, and this plan of mine became real, and the difficulty of school became real, too. Maybe in my seven-year-old mind getting through all this schooling was not daunting, but as I entered high school the harsh reality of my dreams became true. To achieve what I wanted to, I had to work as hard as possible, and find opportunities where I could. Because I was still so adamant about the career path in medicine, I needed to experience things that ensured I was passionate about this work. So, that’s what I did. When I was sixteen years old, I was able to begin my work at Harrison EMS. I became certified in BLS, CPR, and bleeding control. I worked alongside EMTs and paramedics as they were dispatched all over Westchester. It was, and still is, the best thing I have ever been a part of.

One night, working the four to ten night shift, the EMT, paramedic, and I were dispatched to a domestic violence case. When I heard those words, I had no idea what to expect. How bad would it be? What would we walk into? Quite honestly, I was scared. As we walked into the apartment, a petite, middle-aged woman was sitting on a chair, her face severely bruised. Her embarrassment and fear were evident and heartbreaking. As we assessed her injuries, she was very emotional, barely able to articulate her feelings. Medically, she had sustained a severe facial injury from the attack, and we learned she suffered from chronic Lyme's Disease, but she was treatable.

Her apparent fear of her boyfriend and concern of paying for her healthcare was exasperated by her shame surrounding the abuse itself. It was painful to witness but surprisingly, an incredibly life changing experience for me. How could something so horrible happen to such a gentle woman? I knew somehow that this experience would have a definitive influence on me as well as my view of holistic healthcare. While I do not remember exactly what I said to her, I will never forget the reaction I got from her. As we sat and spoke, I saw her slowly become calmer. We had both touched each other's lives in a very real and profound way.

This experience showed me that the impact EMS has on people is much more than medical attention and treatment. I was able to connect with a woman who just had a traumatic experience and alleviate her anxiety. While I knew I was drawn to healthcare because of my love for science, this experience taught me that I also had a real passion and aptitude for patient care. I now understood that it was my responsibility as a member of EMS to support this woman through her emotional pain, while also addressing her physical needs. The compassion and kindness I offered from my heart helped me realize that they are medicinal in their own ways. It

was a privilege to assist this woman in her time of need, and remarkably, this event reinforced that I was pursuing the right career path.

Despite believing I was clear on my future life purpose, I did not fully understand it until this unforgettable night. Without this experience, my future ambition would still be one-dimensional. In meeting this woman and listening to her hardship, I realized that I was so fortunate to have this and other EMS experiences. They helped shape me into an individual with a new perspective and compassion for those that are vulnerable and in the most need. It has taught me that through unexpected events and circumstances, one does not only gain knowledge, but humility and empathy too. It confirmed that when given the opportunity to help people with their physical injuries, recognizing and assisting with their emotional needs is also vital. This realization has helped develop me into a more confident, considerate and compassionate person as well as changed my perspective on life as a whole.

After I was a part of EMS for a while, I knew without a doubt a career in medicine was the thing for me. So, I started searching for more opportunities in which I could explore healthcare more. I applied for an internship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in the city. Fortunately, my application was accepted, and I was able to work at the hospital for two months during the summer in between junior and senior years. I watched procedures, shadowed doctors, and best of all got to play with the kids in the pediatric unit. This experience is invaluable to me. I met the most amazing healthcare workers, and the most inspiring people, making my desire to work in medicine even stronger. It truly made my life plan concrete. And, it allowed me to understand how many important roles there are in a hospital. This helped me enormously because the pressure of becoming a doctor was lifted a bit; even if medical school does not work out, there are so many other roles that I can play in a hospital, and

that realization gives me a lot of hope. I still, of course, will aspire to be a doctor, but that does not mean it is my only option. I think this idea became tangible when I met one of the receptionists at the pediatric unit of the MSKCC. She welcomed and checked-in patients as they arrived each day for their treatments. While she was not a doctor, or a medical professional at all, she offered something very special to all of the patients: comfort. Every child who walked into the hospital lit up when they saw her face. She made them feel safe, and most of all she made them feel less scared. Even though all she did was greet them, and give them their registration bracelet, she changed their entire day by the way she made them feel. This just shows how there are so many roles in hospitals that are often overlooked, and their significance is misunderstood.

After all of the things I experienced in high school, I knew that in applying to college I would be looking for a biology major and pre-med program. Seems like a pretty basic track, right? But I wanted a place that had something different; I wanted an amazing program that offered things other places could not. So my research began. For all the schools I was looking at, I explored every biology department, internship, and pre-med program. And that's when I discovered all of the opportunities the University of Michigan had to offer. Most poignantly, I found out about the Public Health program that is offered for juniors and seniors. This program strives to have students gain the knowledge needed to create and maintain healthy societies. It seems to take medicine a step further by holding people accountable, while still allowing them to be compassionate. This major develops students into problem solvers who want to help others in different societies, and I think it's a sector of healthcare that is easily overlooked. It is so unique and interesting, and I am incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to take advantage of this program at UMich. While I am majoring in biology, I definitely want to pursue the Public Health major later on.

Everything I have done throughout high school has led to this point in my life. As I move onto college, I think about what I have done to get here, and how excited I am for the next chapters of my life. I think attending the University of Michigan next year is going to exceed all expectations, and prepare me for my future career in medicine. Beyond undergraduate school, I hope to come back to New York for medical school. It is difficult to look that far into the future at this point, as I know college is going to be the best years of my life. I am so thankful for all of the opportunities I have had, and I am even more grateful for the ones I will have in the future.