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My Journey

Over a decade has gone by since I first watched a woman giving birth on video in my middle school health class. After watching the video, I completed a presentation on what I would have to do to pursue a career dedicated to the health and well-being of both the mother and child in that classroom video. As a 3rd year medical student reflecting on my early efforts of exploring the field of medicine, I have realized my true passion lies within the practice of family medicine and treating underserved patient populations and communities.

Having grown up in a disadvantaged community in the city of Syracuse, NY, I was no stranger to the acts of violence, drug and alcohol addictions, and educational inequalities commonly seen in city schools and communities. At a young age, I realized that I had to help my family in any way possible to

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provide for myself and my younger siblings. I took on extra responsibilities to help pay for rent and provide for my family. I realized that I had to find a way to overcome my parents' struggles and the impact they had on my family in order to make the most out of my life while inspiring my siblings to do the same.

While pursuing a path that could lead me out of my disadvantaged community, I focused on earning great grades in school and growing my athletic talents to open as many doors as possible to better my life. During my undergraduate years, these challenges continued despite physically removing myself from my disadvantaged upbringing.

Balancing the emotional stress of my parents' addictions and their effects on other family members was not easy. This was especially prevalent while I maintained a division-one track training schedule, and pursued the rigorous courses associated with the nursing undergraduate program at the University at Buffalo. During some semesters, the added pressures created by my family situations seemed overwhelming.

I often felt guilty, that I should have put my dreams on hold to return home and continue to help care for my siblings. It was challenging to manage my family situation at home while I was physically away and trying to make a better future for myself by pursuing my dream of medicine. Through the support of professors, coaches, advisors, medical professionals, and supervisors - I decided that staying on the path to medical school would be in both my best interest,

as well as that of my siblings. My mentors helped me to use my strength and determination to become the physician I wanted to be while serving as a positive example to my family. Maintaining a strong system of support enabled me to finish my undergraduate degree, simultaneously win two M.A.C. Division I track championship titles, graduate with honors, pass my nursing boards successfully, and ultimately be accepted into medical school.

As a third year medical student, I consider myself fortunate to have many mentors who have continued to help me realize that all the hardships I have faced are true assets for the practice of medicine and for caring for patients from all walks of life. As I began juggling the demands of studying for my first year medical school classes, my aunt, who actively raised me, and who I considered to be my ‘mother’, tragically passed away. My aunt provided me a more stable environment than my biological parents could have offered. Studying for the USMLE Step 1 exam, while still coping with the devastating loss of my ‘mother’, was unlike anything I could have fathomed.

Yet again, the continued support of my physician mentors and professors allowed me to see past the pain I was coping with and face this critical time in my life with a clear vision of my future. I was able to pass my USMLE Step 1 exam and remain focused on what I needed to do to care for my future patients. All the struggles I have faced have helped me develop a better understanding of various patient circumstances, and potential barriers to obtaining the care patients need to take control of their health and lives.

As I have grown into my role as a newly practicing physician, ready to learn in my residency training and throughout the entirety of my career, I am confident that I would not have become half the person I am today without my positive physician role models who have helped me manage so many challenging circumstances. As I continue my journey in

the field of medicine, I know I will be able to continue to channel my drive, compassion, and resiliency to benefit the lives of others. I’ve learned that there are ways to rise above surrounding adversities and oppressive situations while pursuing dreams and ultimately giving back to the communities that once hopelessly felt like a trap.

Life is not dictated by where you come from, nor what challenges you grew up with, or even what some members of society say you can or cannot achieve in life. Constantly pursuing your passion, despite environmental and emotional adversities, ultimately determines the internal strength needed to overcome what is set out before you, and facilitates the growth of skills and competencies necessary to have a better life.

My resiliency will continue to make me a stronger and better person and physician. I hope my journey in the field of medicine will continue to encourage others to make a difference while achieving their dreams, regardless of their current circumstances.