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What did Dr. Mary Kraemer and I have in common? At first glance, not much. We had different ethnic backgrounds and different interests within the medical field. She was an internist and I was a black Latina who was interested in neurology. She had been arbitrarily assigned to be my mentor for the next four years of medical school. I was unsure about how this relationship was going to develop, but little did I know she would be my most influential role model during medical school.

My relationship with Dr. Kraemer began as she reviewed the videos from my standardized patient encounters. She gave me honest feedback. She pointed out areas for improvement, but in a constructive manner. After observing me make a mistake during a physical exam, Dr. Kraemer suggested I shadow her. Following this, I began to visit Dr. Kraemer's outpatient consult once a month. She would allow me to practice my physical exam skills and would always discuss the different cases after talking to the patients. This is when I began to see her as a physician I wanted to emulate. She took every patient's complaints very seriously. I recall one day where there was a patient who complained of pain, yet there was no organic explanation for her pain. Any other physician would have labeled her as someone seeking pain medications. Dr. Kraemer made sure to rule out every possible cause. She was kind and nonjudgmental throughout the interview - an attitudes that unfortunately this is not always present. The more I shadowed her, the more I realized that she exemplified the type of physician I wanted to be: a truly compassionate, benevolent physician.

Dr. Kraemer also exemplifies all the qualities I was looking for in a woman mentor in medicine. Growing up, I knew I wanted to be a physician, yet,

I also wanted to be a mother. I knew these two roles were not mutually exclusive, but they were very demanding roles and I was unsure of my ability to carry out both and be equally good at them. Previously, my dad was my only physician role model. I did not have a woman role model in the medical field. Even though this never stopped me, I wondered if I would be able to balance a personal life with a professional life. Dr. Kraemer proved this to be attainable. She is the mother of three boys in elementary school and she does not sacrifice being a great mother. She tries to see all of her patients just in time so she can pick up her boys from school. She dresses up in Halloween costumes and goes trick or treating with them. She helps them with their math homework, even though she might not remember concepts such as long division. She plans birthday parties for them and attends all of their soccer tournaments on the weekends.

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She has also shown me the importance of a true partnership in a marriage. She and her husband share responsibility for the care of their children. As a couple they constantly communicate. Many times while I shadowed her, she would call her husband letting him know if she was going to be home late, and vice versa. She would always take his calls and adjust her day to help him. Yet, she does not sacrifice her role as a physician. On my last encounter with her, she had come in to the hospital at 4AM after she received a call from one of her residents about the lab results of another physician's patient. The patient was an elderly lady in a hyperglycemic hyperosmolar state - a medical emergency. Dr. Kraemer immediately admitted the patient and went on to provide care for this patient.

Dr. Kraemer has proven to be my greatest female role model in medicine. She is actively involved

in medical education and she is a caring, compassionate, and benevolent physician. She also manages to be a great mother and wife. This demystifies the idea that a role model should be someone that looks like you. Race and ethnic backgrounds do not dictate who will be your best role model. Dr. Kraemer is the physician with whom I identify most. Regardless of our differences in background and life experiences, she is someone I admire because of the woman and physician that she is. She carries out every role to the best of her abilities. I constantly ask her, "how do you do it?", and she just simply smiles, as if not realizing what an extraordinary, superwoman she is.

How has she influenced my decision to be a physician? She made me realize that it is possible to maintain a balanced professional and personal life. That there is no need to sacrifice any role you want to fulfill as a woman. That even though it will be difficult and it carries great demands, every effort and sacrifice is worth it. And most importantly, that it is possible to do it all while maintaining the same level of care and compassion for your patients and mentees even while you are sleep deprived or under high levels of stress. She has made me realize that she is the type of woman in medicine I want to become and that she is the type of role model I would like to be for other women pursuing a career in medicine.

