

## Elizabeth Sutton

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### *More sunscreen, please!*

Dr. Margaret Kontras Sutton is a dermatologist, my mother, and woman extraordinaire. Growing up with a mother who specialized in the body's largest organ meant that: I was never far from a tub of sunscreen during the summer (...spring, fall, and winter for that matter); I was the only kid at the pool that actually had to reapply said sunscreen; and she really only looked skin deep (unless I was home late from curfew—then those hazel eyes bore into my soul). But in addition to making certain her three daughters were fed, loved, and protected from the sun, she also inspired my sisters and I to become doctors and we have her to thank for this journey that we are on.

I shadowed my mom in clinic for the first time when I was in high school. It was eye opening to see the bustling clinic and the myriad patients that walked through the door—all there to see my mother. How could it be that the same woman who tucked me in at night and packed my lunch for school was performing biopsies, freezing warts, and diagnosing skin cancer during the day? It was the feeling you get when you take off in an airplane for the first time: shock, awe, and a strong dose of humility.

Three things stood out to me that week at her clinic. First, there is an art that goes into each patient encounter. My mother was sympathetic in her history taking, methodical in her exam, and adroit in her diagnoses. There was a rhythm to her rou-

tine and I was in love with the dance. Secondly, she was a patient teacher. She wove in teaching points throughout the encounter and made sure I saw each lesion or rash and then told me about other ways it could present. And thirdly, she was just as serene and even-keeled in clinic as she was at home. It was impressive to see her and her fellow female partner lead their practice with such passion and professionalism. I returned to work in her clinic during college and loved every second.

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In addition to inspiring me in clinic, she also brought the topic of medicine into our home. She was the first person to introduce me to the notion of the differential diagnosis, a foreign concept to a Sherlock Holmes enthusiast. One summer in college she decided we would go over classic medical cases. I would fall for the red herring and quickly commit to the wrong diagnosis, while she would tell me not what the answer was, but how to think about the problem. She amazed me with her knowledge of the other systems of the body and I realized the extensive knowledge that a physician must acquire. It seemed like a worthy challenge with a big reward: to help other people when they are in their most vulnerable state.

But as my medical school clinical rotations have taught me, to be a good physician one has to love more than just the science. The morals of honesty, integrity, and hard work go hand in hand

with anatomy and physiology. These characteristics describe my mother from the moment she wakes up to the moment she goes to sleep. She was the daughter of a Greek immigrant, Gus Kontras, who settled in Lincoln, Nebraska in the early 1940s when he heard there was a shoe repair store for sale. On the train ride to Lincoln, he met his future wife, Sophia Kosmos. They worked hard and long hours so that their children could have more opportunities for education than they had. My grandparents exemplified the American dream and my mom has carried on their morals of honesty, integrity, and hard work throughout her medical career.

I will admit, my words are biased: the woman I am nominating is same woman who I call Mom. I will disclose, my deck was stacked: my two older sisters chose medicine first. But I owe this woman for being my paradigm of a physician and my inspiration on this journey. I am now in my third year of medical school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, my mother and sisters' alma mater, and am honored to be following in their footsteps (although at this point it is more so a worn path). Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "I don't know who my grandfather was, and I am much more concerned to know what his grandson will be." But I am lucky to know exactly who my mother is both in and out of clinic, and I dearly hope the apple did not fall far from the tree.