

On September 28, 2005, during my sophomore year at the University of Pennsylvania, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. My diagnosis was completely unexpected and was a shock to me and my family. I had to place my life on hold as I underwent chemotherapy and radiation, but in the process I discovered my true passion for medicine.

I viewed my illness as an opportunity to experience medicine from a unique perspective, and my interests in clinical and laboratory medicine were further stimulated. My diagnosis transformed me into an oncology intern, learning about various aspects of health care that, until then, remained unfamiliar to me. My oncologist became my teacher and mentor. Through her, I learned how to establish a comfortable patient-doctor relationship, earn a patient's trust, and give a patient hope for the future despite setbacks and lingering uncertainties. A year after my diagnosis, I was declared in remission and have remained healthy ever since.

I enjoy sharing my experiences with my peer medical students and others considering a career in medicine. While many students are inspired to pursue medicine due to the loss of a loved one, I like to remind others that medicine is also about success and prolonging the lives of our patients. Success and renewal of health is what provides optimism and hope for the future, while death and loss remind us that there is much left to accomplish. I hope that my story can inspire my peers to continue to work towards improving the lives of all of our future patients.

As I prepare to embark on my third year clerkships in July, I hope to embody the spirit of Dr. Gunder in the compassion and genuineness I seek to display in every clinical encounter. His memory and the memory of all those lost to illness will always inspire me to work towards advancing the field of medicine, while my own triumph will motivate me to approach every patient with optimism and hope for the future.