

While I have always been committed to working with the underprivileged and underserved, I was not always sure I wanted to do so as a medical doctor. I ended up taking three years between my undergraduate studies at UPenn and medical school at Penn State, in order to give myself the opportunity to explore other possibilities. During those years, my experiences at the Southeast Lancaster Health Services Obstetrics Department made me realize I was not going to be able to run from medical school anymore. Through volunteering at Southeast, I realized that my passions and talents really fit the physician profession.

I moved back to my parents' home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, after spending several months traveling abroad, post-graduation. I had found a job working at a commercial photography studio, as I am an avid photographer and was considering a change to photojournalism. I also began volunteering within my community, and ended up meeting a social worker employed at Lancaster's Federally Qualified Health Center, Southeast Lancaster Health Services. As we were talking, she mentioned a new mother-baby support group she was working on. It caught my interest and I asked if she needed help. I began working on the mother-baby group, which helped new mothers tackle the obstacles a new baby brings to the table. We covered all-encompassing educational topics related to nutrition, exercise, dental health, proper hygiene, contraception, and how to apply for government-sponsored health programs. I was hooked. I began spending my entire morning at the clinic, chatting with physicians, nurse practitioners, and staff. I wanted to know more ways to piece together the puzzle of resources for these mothers. It was then mentioned that Southeast was lacking an efficient and updated means of tracking female patients with abnormal pap smear results. I took over the project and created a database to monitor pap results, follow-up, and patient compliance for well over 3,000 women spanning nearly 9,000 visits and test results. But I felt the most motivated and excited as I walked into the exam room when shadowing the physicians. I felt that my organizational and interpersonal skills, my passion for working with the underserved, and my love of science and education were melded together in those visits. And with the encouragement of my co-workers at Southeast, I began to study for the MCAT. The rest is history.

As a medical student at Penn State, I continue to pursue similar clinical experiences, as the current Student Chair for the LionCare Free Clinic. Through LionCare, I have been able to work with many first-year medical students to help them shape the clinic into their own vision. Additionally, one of LionCare's many goals is to educate socially responsible physicians, while they are medical students. It is a mentoring role I gladly hold. I hope to continue to lead by example as a physician in the future. I hope to use my teaching experiences to inspire students to pursue medicine as a career and to realize a physician's inherent value to the local community.