

Gregory Maeder

I enjoy a challenge. I began rowing in high school and discovered a sport that requires perpetual concentration in addition to strength and determination. The timing throughout the boat must be synchronized precisely, and each fragment of the stroke must be clean and perfect in order to maximize kinetic energy. Rowing takes dedication to scrupulous practice and training.

The study of medicine has provided me a similar challenge. I have spent many scrupulous hours poring over details of the basic sciences and facets of patient care. Amidst those many hours was a yearning to contribute to medicine in practice rather than merely read about it. I often wondered during my first two years of medical school which specialty I would most enjoy.

As I rotated through my third-year clerkships, I found that I liked many aspects of each specialty, so primary care seemed a good choice to pursue. Of my primary care rotations, I enjoyed family practice the most. Part of my attraction to family medicine was the challenge of surprise. It was necessary to study all of the fields of medicine, because each day I saw something unexpected and exciting. I felt, and still feel, inspired to rise to that challenge.

One patient encounter had a particularly defining impact on me. A young man came for an initial visit with an upper respiratory infection. After asking about his symptoms, I reviewed his medical history, including a screen for domestic violence. Instead of the expected chuckle that most men had responded with, he expressed some ambiguity. I discovered that he and his wife argued frequently and became angry easily. He seemed fearful that their volatile emotions might progress to physical violence in the future. I felt incredibly privileged that this patient had admitted his shortcomings to me, a medical student that he had never met before. Even more so, I was excited that he had given someone the chance to intervene and change the outcome. We discussed his different options, and eventually decided that he and his wife would benefit greatly from marriage counseling.

Family medicine provides the opportunity to intervene and make life-altering changes. We are trained foremost to attend to the health concerns and disease status of patients, but as a family physician gets to know someone on a personal level, the physician can impact many different aspects of a person's life and personalize intervention based on the individual's background and goals. Also, the family physician has the distinct privilege of following the patient's progress and coordinating input from physicians in other disciplines. My passion for family medicine is similar to that for rowing because both challenge and reward greatly.

I can achieve some of my lifelong goals in family medicine as well. I am interested in complementary medicine, and I intend to pursue certification in acupuncture. My hope is to offer patients a variety of treatment options for problems such as chronic pain. In addition, I decided to spend a fifth year and graduate with an M.B.A. in addition to an

M.D. degree. Several physicians recommended business training during my medical school experiences, but I was unsure about spending the extra year required. When I became engaged to a medical student in the class behind mine, I had even more reason to spend the year earning the additional degree. With many hopes and aspirations, I look forward to the next step in my career.