

One hundred thousand miles and family medicine: my unique journey. Over the past four years, I have traveled over 100,000 miles to broaden my medical education. I have connected with diverse communities, networked at educational conferences and volunteered for those in need. I respect the strong connection between family doctors and the community, especially those that protect the underserved and vulnerable populations. I look forward to the comprehensive medical, procedural and behavioral training that a family medicine residency provides.

When Katrina ravaged the gulf coast, I sought opportunities to assist the rebuilding effort there. I was inspired by the resilient spirit of the individuals I met, yet disturbed by their lack of medical access. After speaking with several uninsured Vietnamese-only speaking fishermen families, it became obvious there is an overwhelming need for culturally competent physicians. This increased my determination to protect the health of vulnerable non-English speaking populations as a multilingual family physician providing community-based medical care and education.

Afterwards I drove to Georgia to help build a home for a local homeless family. This exposed me to the struggles that any family could face at any given time, and also motivated me to join local homeless awareness efforts and free clinics. One bitterly cold winter day, I met a disheveled homeless schizophrenic unable to maintain a job or apartment due to his disabling illness. One year after plugging him into the health care system and providing him uninterrupted access to medications, he is happily employed and no longer living on the streets. This demonstrates the importance of having access to a primary care physician, and why I would like to offer my services to free clinics to provide that access.

I have often thought about barriers to access during long drives back to Minnesota. Sometimes I have had to navigate through heavy rain or blinding snow to reach my aging parents. I have shown the same dedication for my patients and would visit them in their homes if necessary. I once saw a septic patient in the hospital with a severely infected foot ulcer. He had depended on others for transportation so he never came to the clinic. Had he been seen by a physician in his own home, he likely would not have needed his foot amputated. This illustrates why I envision my future practice will include significant time for home visits. I plan to always be accessible for my patient's needs.

Likewise, while driving in rural Ohio I admired how family physicians there were always accessible and involved in all aspects of patient care. Beyond the routine office visits and procedures, family physicians also performed screening colonoscopies and even scrubbed into surgeries. These physicians are an example of the comprehensive and holistic care I would like to provide for my patients.

From rural Ohio to rural Vietnam, I discovered the role of physicians can be expanded even further. Providing comprehensive care meant not just being a physician, but also being a dentist, pharmacist, nutritionist, counselor, educator and much more. This challenges me to not only be a well-rounded clinician, but to also to become an advocate and leader. I hope to have the time to participate in international aid trips that extend access and continuity-of-care to communities around the world.

Back in the United States, I have been driving to many different sites for my clinical rotations. Everything from well-child checks, delivering babies, assisting surgeries, to counseling patients with mood disorders have all been rewarding experiences. Every patient I have seen has taught me something that I can apply to family medicine. I look forward to keeping an entire family healthy so that generous grandparents are around to watch their adorable grandchildren grow up.

In the future I aspire to incorporate my experience and training into a family medicine practice that does not turn its back on the vulnerable. I plan to improve access by maintaining an open door policy, providing regular home visits and volunteering at local free clinics. I also strive to provide comprehensive, holistic and culturally competent care. I hope to achieve this through attaining multilingual training, developing community partnerships and providing international aid. I look forward to a fulfilling career in family medicine, and another 100,000 miles of experiences to come.