

Reach. Kick to the face. Reach again. Breathe in some water. Reach again. Cough it up. Reach again. Reach again. Stroke after stroke. Nothing compares to the swimming leg of a triathlon- an event I have come to really enjoy over the years. In choosing my residency path as family medicine, I have found it has much in common with triathlons. While swimming in a tri, there are many setbacks to work through. It is easy to see each of these kicks to the ribs, or gulps of water as insurmountable. In moving through third year of medical school, I have experienced that every day there is a person out there who thinks they are on their way to drowning. Whether it be by obesity, heart disease, kidney failure or depression, people need someone to help them, to keep them from drowning. And not just by treating their illness, but also by swimming beside them, and making sure at every stroke they are reaching their goal. This is where I can help- because this is where I excel, where I thrive.

Part of what I love most about triathlons (and about my life in general) is the variety. Every triathlon course is different; the water and weather are never the same. I grew up on a farm where I raised dairy feeders and built grain bins and elevator legs. Then I played various sports, obtained my engineering degree, and will soon become a doctor. Variety must be an essential part of my future residency program, my career and my life. The more variations, oddities, populations and cultures I see during residency, the happier I will be. Of course each field of medicine will have its "bread and butter," which I look forward to hopefully mastering down the road. But the more variety I see, the more knowledgeable and experienced I feel, and the better I will perform and enjoy medicine. I want to be the one on the plane who knows what to do; the person who travels abroad and does everything needed to run the tiny rural clinic. From a 1-year-old to an 89-year-old, I want to know what to do in any situation. My second desire in a residency program stems from years playing team sports and judging teamwork competitions. From those experiences, I know without a doubt that a strong team can outperform any individual, and teamwork equals success. So I also look for a positive atmosphere where I can build, or be a part of, a healthy team environment with everyone's strengths working in concert. As an engineer, I always liked the phrase "a well-oiled machine." It is a motto I strive for in my everyday life, and is a statement I want to be used when describing my residency program, as well as my future clinic of doctors, nurses and staff.

In the future, my ideal practice would be in a somewhat smaller city similar to that which I grew up in. While observing my father run his business over the years, I have watched as his customers have become his good and loyal friends. I yearn for that same transition where my patients become my friends, and where I can see my positive influence in the community around me. The bike portion of a triathlon always takes the longest, but when you reach the end, you have accomplished so much that it is well worth the effort. When I look at my practice 10 years down the road, I want to have that exact same feeling of accomplishment. The second and necessary piece to my ideal clinic would involve some sports medicine to feed the ever-hungry passion I have for being in/around the sports community. There is an energy there that is never ending. I would love to see myself in a sports medicine fellowship following my residency to help achieve this vision.

The run in a triathlon is the final leg and it is all about the final test of mental toughness and about giving your last ounces of energy. This is probably my favorite part, partly because I feel I excel during the run. Not because I am fast, but because I have more spirit, perseverance and determination than a lot of other people out there. These are the characteristics I have that I hope to transfer to my residency program- an unwavering work ethic, determination and

energy. That overwhelming sensation of crossing the finish line is what I long for in my career as a family physician.