

PEDIATRIC RESIDENCY PERSONAL STATEMENT

I peek through the window and see a young girl, clutching her teddy bear and watching Frozen on the TV. I quickly braid my hair, grab my stethoscope, and knock on the door, before entering the room. "Hi Angela!" I say as I enter the room, "My name is Jessica." I quickly introduce myself to her nervous parents and refocus my attention on Angela. I see that her eyes haven't left the TV, but she has curled up at the top of the bed. "Oh, you're watching Frozen," I say as I walk closer to the bed, "I love that movie! Who is your favorite character?" Angela pulls the teddy bear down from around her face and says "Elsa." "And what is your teddy bear's name?" I inquire. She cracks a smile while her mom chimes in saying "Mr. Teddy." "Is it okay if I practice on Mr. Teddy first?" I ask as I place my stethoscope on his fuzzy chest. She nods emphatically. "Alright now your turn," I say as I place the now warmed stethoscope on Angela's thin frame. "We both have braids like Elsa" I point out as I turn my head to show her my braid. She smiles and swings her braid around her shoulder to show me hers.

When in an unfamiliar situation, sometimes the smallest things can make such a big difference. Not only did connecting with Angela on her level allow me to perform a more relaxed and interactive physical exam, but it also alleviated her parents' anxiety regarding her care. Angela was diagnosed with diabetes on that hospital admission, and after the shock and the reality of her diagnosis had set in, she left the hospital doing blood glucose sticks like a pro. The shy little six-year-old girl that had entered the hospital had given way to a child determined to face her diabetes with a brave new attitude.

Unlike Angela, who will now need regular follow up for her chronic medical condition, I was fortunate to rarely see my pediatrician while growing up. This gave me a one-sided view of pediatrics, and until I entered my pediatric clerkship, I had not considered becoming a pediatrician. My inpatient pediatric rotation caught me by complete surprise and I was instantly captivated. I am drawn to the acuity of care provided to children in an in-patient setting, the clinical problem solving, and the interprofessional teamwork involved. Seeing concerned parents bring in an acutely ill child, providing care to them, and watching the child's personality and energy return once feeling better is simply priceless.

The emphasis on education and public health also fueled my passion for pediatrics. Working in a border community, I see a large population that is underserved and lacks in basic public health education including: the benefits of breastfeeding, child safety, vaccination, and sex education for teens, among others. I view pediatricians not only as health practitioners, but also as advocates for children. Whether pediatricians are advocating for an individual child, or acting on a larger scale by working with school systems, public health departments, or influencing public policy, I see these activities as fundamental to improving the health and wellbeing of children. Indeed, I have spent time in medical school working to advocate and serve diverse and underserved populations, and I plan to continue doing so throughout residency and my career. Working to co-found the Medical Student Run Clinic at my medical school has taught me so much about evaluating community needs, assessing health literacy level, advocating

for an underserved patient population, seeking out and mobilizing community resources, and implementing an effective clinic model to serve the needs of the patient population.

In the future, I hope to work with others to expand access to care for disadvantaged populations. I also see myself teaching in some capacity, whether in academic medicine or through community and public health centers. I look forward to a career in pediatrics where I can combine all of the things that I am passionate about including teaching, patient advocacy, and increasing access to care, while providing care to the young patient population that I enjoy interacting with so much. Whether the patient is a timid little girl like Angela, a member of an underserved community, or Mr. Teddy, I will provide compassionate, culturally competent care that makes each patient comfortable and builds a strong doctor-patient relationship.