

In life, there are few exceptions to the rules that we abide by...but the field of dermatology is the exception to the rule that we “should not judge a book by its cover.” While we are taught to look beyond the exterior, the foundation of dermatology rests on diagnosis of skin diseases with the unaided eye. In my opinion, this field requires compassion, versatility, a love for general medicine, and a desire to explore the unknown...all qualities that I feel I possess in great strength.

Compassion is a trait that every physician should possess. As a result of my own personal experiences, I feel that I have developed more compassion than many of my fellow peers. I was badly injured in a car accident during my second year of medical school, and I can appreciate the experience of the patient in the health care setting. I sustained injuries that left me with both physical and emotional scars. Losing vision in my right eye and dealing with a permanent surgical scar from orthopedic intervention for a fractured radius forced me to develop a great deal of empathy for the “other side” of the physician-patient relationship. Dermatologists deal with underlying psychological issues concerning appearance far more than other fields of medicine do, and this requires an enormous amount of patience and understanding. All of these mannerisms have become second nature to me in the natural course of my recovery, and they will serve me quite well as a dermatologist.

Versatility is a unique feature in dermatology, and a trait that I definitely possess, as the field encompasses the pathway from direct visualization to information processing to pathological examination. It is one of the few fields in which the complexities of identification, microscopy, and treatment are very delicately intertwined. Aspects of dermatology that appeal to me are the fast-paced outpatient setting which offers the benefits of clinic and procedure time, the continuity of care, and the pleasure of seeing patients get better with time. Dermatology has its roots in internal medicine, making the systemic manifestations even more interesting. Luckily, general medicine greatly appeals to me, allowing the etiology of many skin diseases to be traced back to “the basics.” Furthermore, dermatology is one of the few fields that is inextricably linked to pathology, another field that I am genuinely interested in. Pathology was my favorite subject during medical school, as is evidenced by my induction into the Association of Pathology Chairs Honor Society. This award is granted to the top ten percent of each class completing the pathology course, and my true love for the subject matter is reflected by my performance.

Finally, my desire to explore the unknown will be an asset in this field. While “the surface” is central to dermatology, digging beneath the surface is far more critical to making a difference in the medical field. For this reason, I would like to pursue a career in the academic setting, in hopes that this venue will enable me to teach and give back to others the gift of education. I believe communication and education are paramount to a successful career in medicine, and I wish to teach my patients and my peers. My own life experiences and disturbing twists of fate have taught me to value the following quote: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” Reinhold Neibuhr, *The Serenity Prayer*, 1933. Although it has been difficult, I have become a stronger person and I have gained incredible insight into all aspects of the medical field in the course of recovering after my car accident. Many obstacles have surfaced during my recovery, but I have discovered a quiet strength that will serve me well in all of my endeavors. The knowledge I have gained as a medical student and the compassion and insight that I have developed as a patient will serve me well as a dermatologist, and I hope I get the chance to fulfill my dreams and aspirations as a member of your program!