

4

4

From Being the Patient to Becoming the Provider

Prompt: Please explain why you are interested in being a Physician Assistant.

I sat quietly with my mother in the examination room waiting for the doctor to come in and check me out. I was eleven years old with a severe case of cystic acne--my confidence was not the strongest because it was hard to be the only one in fifth grade who had such a condition. The door opened, and a young woman in a white coat stepped in to examine me. She made me feel comfortable, and told me they were going to do everything they could to get this condition under control. As she talked to me, I could tell she understood that, while that this was not exactly threatening to my health, it was threatening to my appearance, and even more so to my self-esteem. When she left, my mother said, "Now, that lady wasn't a doctor; she was a physician assistant." That was my first ever interaction with a PA. I would see the dermatology PA regularly every four months for years after that. Sometimes, the dermatologist would come in, but her consultations were rare. The PA would perform procedures on me and prescribe medications; she asked the dermatologist a few times about her opinion, but the PA seemed autonomous. When I was in high school, my curiosity about the PA profession grew, and I started doing my own research. I was timid though, and my mother, a nurse, told me I could not be so shy if I wanted to make it in the medical field. As time went on, I learned to live with my severe acne, and it did not bother me so much anymore. I was the varsity captain of my high school soccer team, and my confidence grew. Then, when I started college, I gained some real exposure to a health care setting, confirming that I wanted to be a PA.

During college breaks, I had an extensive PA shadowing experience through the Cleveland Clinic. I shadowed in spinal health, orthopedics, pain management, and plastic surgery. It was incredible to see a variety of specialties, each PA having a unique relationship with his or her overseeing doctor. The PAs I shadowed loved their jobs. They explained the joy of helping make a difference in a patient's life, the flexibility they have with switching specialties, and the lasting connections they make with their co-workers. They also had to complete a good amount of paperwork, which they confessed as their least favorite part of their career.

While shadowing was certainly formative, transformative has been my weekly volunteer work at Grace Clinic, the free medical clinic in Delaware, Ohio. I am able to directly interact with patients. I take their height, weight, and temperature, ask them about their medical history, and guide them into a room. When I am not too busy, I can sit with them in the waiting area and hear about their lives. Also, I am able to connect with the nurses, doctors, and PAs who volunteer. Volunteering at a free clinic has given me a whole new perspective on health care. Many of the patients are poor, young, and do not speak English. After volunteering only a few weeks at the clinic, I started to realize how important it is to the Delaware community. Not only can people receive medical care, but they also have an opportunity to see specialists, and receive free or discounted medication. Volunteers are vital to the workings of the clinic. Nurses, doctors, physician assistants, secretaries, and pharmacists take time from their busy lives; however, no

one has ever complained about it, because they are passionate about providing care for those in need. I look forward to every week at Grace Clinic, and even became a volunteer at the Cleveland Clinic, so I continue volunteering in a health care setting when I am home from school. Through my volunteer work, I have a better understanding of medical care for the less fortunate. When I become a physician assistant, I aspire to work with underserved populations or at a free clinic.

I am a unique candidate for the physician assistant program: I am a biology with minors in chemistry, research psychology, and Spanish. Currently, I hold an internship position as the chemical hygiene coordinator for the chemistry department, and I am a peer tutor for introductory biology students. I also hold an executive position with Ohio Wesleyan's student government. After receiving a grant from my university, I studied the peace process in Northern Ireland. My overall work experience during college is vast, from doing manual labor for a summer in a factory to being a teaching assistant for general chemistry labs. This fall semester I have been chosen to participate in the Practicum of Medicine through Grady Memorial Hospital. This course will provide me with hands on clinical experience. I will bring the same commitment, work-ethic, and leadership to the PA program.

When I was eleven, my PA had excellent communication skills, and empathy. She made me feel important. I want to be a PA like her. There's an eleven year old out there somewhere waiting. I dream of the opportunity to become a compassionate physician assistant who will provide patient-centered care with professionalism and integrity.