

I was already awake as the alarm buzzed at 6 AM. How could I not be? Like every morning, I awoke with the chilled feeling of cortisol pumping through my veins and a pressurized fear of the outdoors lingering in my thoughts. The very idea of exiting my house was paralyzing, but my years of anxiety and agoraphobia became my new normal. My psychiatrist gave me medication after medication, followed by intensive cognitive behavior therapy, and a drastic change in diet. My parents suggested yoga and meditation. Nothing seemed to make a difference. Feeling powerless, I thought that the best way to deal with my disorder was to do my absolute best in understanding how my symptoms arose in the first place.

Driven to better understand the pathophysiology of what I was experiencing, I decided to purchase some books on neurology. I was completely enamored with the diagrams, the pictures, and the endless details of neurons and glial cells. Most of all, however, I had experienced a comfort that I had not felt since before my diagnosis. Knowing how my brain was working helped ensure that I gradually became healthier over time. Feeling progressively better, I was also ready to further pursue my newfound and insatiable curiosity for the medical sciences.

In my years of undergraduate studies, I took some of the most challenging courses I had ever enrolled in, but learning about the mechanisms necessary for life fascinated me. My captivation only reinforced my interest in medicine and left me looking for some exposure to the field. Shadowing neurologists, cardiologists, OB-GYNs, and pediatricians were all invaluable experiences, but none of the respective fields and their day-to-day practices seemed to resonate with me. While working as a medical scribe at a pediatric hospital, I could not help but notice the volume of patients we sent to podiatrists--a field I was not at all familiar with.

Being that I was already feeling somewhat lost in the field of medicine, I decided to expand my horizons. I started shadowing the foot and ankle surgeon within our hospital, Dr. X. Seeing the breadth of disease that he was diagnosing and treating was unlike anything I had ever seen. On any given day, I observed several variations of dermatological, neurological, and cardiovascular disease affecting the lower limbs. Some shadowing sessions included reconstructive surgery, while others included general diabetic check-ups. The scope that I was seeing was alluring in ways that no other branch of medicine could compare. But, the most profound aspect of the field was the blatant need for practitioners fighting against the increasing level of cardiovascular disease. Diabetes especially, combined with an aging population, means that a surge of additional patients, and the health of their lower limbs, will need to be addressed. It was astonishing to witness Dr. X treat life-threatening diseases. When people's ability to move and travel disappears, you can see their livelihood and sense of humanity dwindle. It was one of the most aching ailments to witness but by far the most rewarding to treat. I saw a clear objectivity to helping patients regain mobility, and that process inspired me.

The feeling of anxiety is not all that different from the feeling of excitement medicine brings me. The key difference is that my panic was stagnant. While dealing with the daily struggles brought upon by my disorder, it was easy to feel little more than dismay. In medicine, whether it be the instance of picking up those neurology books for the first time, or seeing what Dr. X does on a daily basis, the potential for change and growth is unambiguous. My path towards pursuing podiatry has been long and tumultuous, but for good reasons. I have spent hundreds of hours in several specialties within medicine, and in doing so, I have greatly refined the type of medicine I aspire to practice. Because of my diverse shadowing and work

experiences, combined with the indisputable value Podiatrists like Dr. X provides to their patients, I feel confident in pursuing the inspiring and intellectually stimulating field of Podiatry.