

Ensign Keren Arkin

Ensign Keren Arkin, U.S. Public Health Service, is a member of the Doctor of Medicine Class of 2009 at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. She was born in Israel and moved to the U.S. at the age of five. She lived in Florida until she was 12 and then moved to Maryland, where she went to high school. Ensign Arkin had always been interested in the sciences, and was always more into the analytical subjects than the humanities, which is why she went to college for engineering. She majored in Biomedical Engineering at Duke University because it was closely related to the medical field and focused on the applied aspects of medicine versus basic research. After graduation from Duke, she began a graduate program in Bioengineering at the University of Washington. She thought she wanted to go into R&D in the pharmaceutical industry but her interests took her in another direction. After graduating with a Masters in Science in Engineering, she spent the next two years pursuing a personal passion – the mountains. She was an instructor for the Colorado Outward Bound School, leading courses in the mountains. She was also an instructor and course director for the Boojum Institute for Experiential Education, leading trips for middle school students and teaching them about the local environment. During these experiences she became certified as a Wilderness First Responder and learned more about the field of wilderness medicine. She met physicians and medical students who also shared an interest in the area, which made her think about medical school for the first time. She then decided to put her engineering education to use while working for the Food and Drug Administration in California. She was a Consumer Safety Officer who conducted regulatory inspections of medical device manufacturers, as well as food manufacturers and foreign importers. While working for the FDA she learned of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS). There were about a dozen USPHS officers working in the same office with her, and through them she learned that she qualified to join the Commissioned Corps of the USPHS by being a biomedical engineer. She was commissioned in March 2003. Thus began her career as an active duty officer. While working at the FDA, she interacted with USPHS physicians who had expressed to her the varied careers and opportunities they encountered while serving in the USPHS. She began taking steps to prepare for medical school. In the process, she also found out about USU from one of the physicians in her office who had been an adjunct faculty member at USU years before. He told her that the USPHS could sponsor her at USU if she got a spot, and that it was a great way to maintain her commission with USPHS and become a physician simultaneously. She had been out of college for nine years by the time she started medical school, but believes that it's the experiences before medical school that makes the dynamics of her class so fascinating.