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I knew I wanted to be a doctor before I could do multiplication tables. I grew up in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma where my parents started talking about education and my future as soon as I mastered those math tables. My first exposure to medicine was through my mother. As a hospital volunteer, I shadowed her during her nursing shifts and measured each patient's oxygen saturation and temperature. Even at a young age, I was extremely optimistic that I would find myself challenged and fulfilled by practicing medicine.

I always begin a chapter of my life with the goal to take advantage of every opportunity put in front of me. At Sweet Briar College, a small woman's college in Virginia, I started doing bench research as a first-year, but I also served on the student government, was my sorority's vice-president, and took ballet classes. I graduated in 2001 with high honors in Biochemistry/Molecular Biology. Taking advantage of opportunities rose to a new level as I entered medical school at George Washington University in Washington, DC. As a rising fourth year student, I have learned the art of medicine from passionate classroom instructors, clinicians, physician scientists, and researchers. While each of my mentors has contributed to medicine in a different way, they all have taught me to develop a strong sense of camaraderie and service. I watched and now participate in the selfless act of caring, healing, and curing patients as a member of a very talented, inspiring team of medical professionals.

As I moved from the classroom to the medical wards, my curiosity about the evidentiary basis for the treatment methods I was taught led me to seek clinical research opportunities at the National Institutes of Health. Accepting a year-long fellowship position in the Clinical Research Training Program (CRTP) was the way I choose to pursue my interest further. There, I anticipated I would study, gain some proficiency, and perhaps advance, even in a small way, evidenced based medicine. Under the expert guidance of my mentor,

Dr. Lee Helman, at the National Cancer Institute, I made a beginning. My research involving childhood sarcomas has led me to strongly consider a future in clinical research. Discovery of the biology behind tumors will ultimately lead to treatment regimens designed for individualized patients according to their specific tumor biology. Care of pediatric patients on the medical wards and research in the laboratory has led me to the conclusion that the art of medicine is a seamless collaboration between the bench and the bedside.

My experience during the CRTP gave me the opportunity to take advantage of the unparalleled resources that the NIH provides to its physician scientists. Conducting quality research is facilitated by excellent staff, first-rate facilities, and collaboration among researchers. I am currently exploring pediatric residency programs that offer a research track in their curriculum and provide residents with opportunities for clinical research. Beyond residency, I anticipate completing a fellowship in pediatric hematology/oncology where I will be called back to the bench to conduct research that strengthens evidenced based medicine. I would consider myself extremely fortunate to return to NIH for my fellowship training and work among the caring, talented, and innovative physician scientists that have served as my mentors during this program.

Outside of work at the Clinical Research Center, I have spent time with many of the CRTP fellows celebrating birthdays, weddings, holidays, and finding any excuse to have Sunday brunch. Living in Bethesda allows you to be close to the NIH campus, metro DC, and countless restaurants and coffee shops. I have explored the hiking/running trails that connect Bethesda to DC, and I am currently training for a race this summer. I am indebted to the NIH-CRTP staff for their countless efforts to make this year possible and for rewarding personal and academic experiences throughout this year.