

My parents have always jokingly told me that I am injury-prone, but I prefer to consider myself more of an injury opportunist. While accidents are bound to happen at some point in a person's life, my competitive soul—mixed with my love for athletics and my passion for the outdoors—has made these incidents more commonplace than I would have hoped for. I have learned to embrace my misfortunes, however, and have transformed my many challenges into learning opportunities. With a face-full of second- and third-degree burns, four broken bones and a couple of torn ligaments behind me, I have had plenty of opportunities to gain insight into the medical field. In fact, every hospital visit, doctor's appointment and post-injury check-up has only made me more certain about what I want to do with my life.

I want to help the little girl who accidentally kicked glass in her eye while flipping upside down on the swing set during recess—even if she screams the entire time she is in my office. From first-hand experience, I know that a physician's calm demeanor can help alleviate that girl's fear. I want to ensure that the second grader, who was severely burned after getting a flaming marshmallow flung into her eye at a Northern Michigan bonfire, is left with no visible scars. By taking the time to tend to the third-degree burns with precise focus, I know that a physician can use her training to ensure that the girl heals perfectly. When that middle-school volleyball player breaks her ankle in a game against her crosstown rivals, I want to be the physician that signs my name on the pink cast that I plastered for her. And finally, I want to be able to promise the high school senior, who broke her hand during the season-opener, that she will be healed in time to play one last game of varsity softball before she graduates. I admire the kindness, clearness of judgment and dedication to each patient that I have seen in these physicians, and I want to bring those same qualities to each patient that I will care for someday.

Along with those qualities, I strive to further my knowledge as a lifelong learner. In less than one year, many of my friends will be out in the "real world" and finished with school forever. They will start jobs in engineering and business, never to return to the realm of higher education. To be quite honest, that prospect terrifies me. I am in no way ready to stop learning, which is why I am drawn to the field of medicine. Through my personal experiences, I have become intrigued and inspired by the knowledge and lifestyle of learning that physicians possess. By watching my father, I have seen firsthand what it means to be a physician outside the office and to continue to learn every day. I have seen him read one scientific journal after another and listen to hours of recorded discussions to keep up with the latest methods of treatment in his field. I know that aspiring to become a physician means committing to being a lifelong learner for the sake of my patients, and that sounds like my dream job. With three years of undergraduate education under my belt, I know that I have only scratched the surface of what I want to learn. Medical school would not only provide me with four more years of formal education, but it would also allow me to enter a profession where I can continue to foster my passion for learning for the rest of my life.

In clinical settings, I have done my share of rotations as the patient—progress check-ups with specialists in the burn ward, visits to the ophthalmologist's office and unscheduled appointments with a team of orthopedic surgeons. But there

is just one problem: I have spent my entire life learning about the intricacies of medicine from an outsider's perspective. Now I want to see those journals that my father reads and the hospital wings that I have visited from a new set of eyes, and that is where medical school comes in. I aspire to be the type of physician who makes a difference in her patient's lives, just as the many physicians I have seen have made an impact on mine. After twenty-one years of being the patient, it is time for a change. It is time for me to understand what it feels like to be the one to provide the medical care, not just to receive it. It is time for me to learn to be the physician.