

Through seven-year-old eyes I watched in terror as my mother grimaced in pain. I held her hand, wiped her forehead with a cool wet towel, and longed for the pain to subside. All our long discussions, all the maternity books, all the studied fetus pictures, did little to prepare me for the birthing process. During the long labor I frequently walked out of the room, pacing, torn between fear and loyalty. My two younger sisters were with Grandma, away from chaos, and although my parents thought I was sufficiently mature to watch the birth of my brother, I was frightened. Blood, screams, breathing techniques, tight squeezes on small hands, and later smiles, a beautiful baby, sisters crowding, coos, and laughs made my first experience with obstetrics one of the most memorable and unique experiences of my life.

Later on, two more sisters joined our family. Being in a home with five women instilled in me a deep sense of empathy and listening skills that would later be necessary for me in a field where the presenting symptoms and problems would never be personally experienced. From an early age I was exposed to a full range of women's health issues which now allows me to discuss these issues in an open and comfortable manner in a variety of clinical settings. Having a sister with Down syndrome gave me many opportunities to educate others from a young age, which has since developed into a strong desire to be in an environment where education and teaching are prevalent. Coming from a large family, there are differing passionate views of everything from religion and politics down to how to cook a turkey, which conditioned me to be a team player, overcoming differences and obstacles to reach a common goal. Ultimately growing up in this environment helped me develop the interpersonal skills and characteristics necessary to succeed as a physician.

Being a new 3rd year medical student on the surgery service, it didn't take much time to realize that a man lying in bed, writhing in discomfort, doesn't want to hear the common greeting "How's it going?" I found myself avoiding the phrase in the hospital, it being inappropriate where pain and death were so prevalent. Nine months later, walking into an exam room, my tongue slipped and the taboo greeting came out. However this was different. As smiles and greetings were exchanged, questions asked and answered, plans for futures shared, concerns addressed, and potential baby names revealed, I realized these prenatal visits were the most positive clinic experiences I'd had.

Obstetrics and Gynecology has much to offer and although challenges are a part of any medical field, I enjoy working with a patient population where health and new life are prevalent. I was surprised at the powerful emotions I felt while delivering a child. I enjoy the moments of intensity that every birth and every c-section offer. The various and interesting gynecologic surgeries and procedures appeal to my desire to be in a surgical field. I appreciate the clinics where patient relationships are established and maintained. Despite being told my gender didn't belong and discouraging accounts of the litigation environment, I can't deny the affinity I feel towards Obstetrics and Gynecology. Ultimately the benefits far exceed the small hesitations, and as I further evaluate this field I believe my characteristics and skills, developed since childhood, will help me give back to this unique patient population.