

"Seriously!? Do you think I'm a *baby* or something!?" he said, with an insulted look (and half-chewed Saltine crackers) smeared across his face. Of course, Ben and I had already become well acquainted at this point, as my first clinical experiences usually came in multiples of three: me first, me plus a resident, me plus a resident plus an attending. "Hi Ben, yes, I brought even more friends to see you. Yes, I am pretty popular around here." Our whirlwind relationship had begun a few days earlier in the ED as a consult, continued through his surgery and was now still burning hot on the post-surgical floor. Ben was swiftly and easily expanding his sphere of influence.

He was that patient who was hardly ever in the room when I was looking for him. The reason for his growing popularity stemmed from a combination of simply being a cute, precocious kid, and having sometimes *too* much to say. Whether he was flirting with staff, posing in the bathroom mirror, softening up the grumpy patient down the hall, or finagling extra snacks, he was decidedly not easy to locate during rounds. He had been softly encouraged not to roam quite so far, but he was clearly a handful for his parents or their substitutes alike, and to make matters worse it was in the midst of the often-stressful holiday season.

Nothing is worse than spending the holidays—especially Christmas—in the hospital for a six-year-old. How would Santa find him if he wasn't even home? Why hadn't someone made arrangements with The Claus to accommodate the situation? Does he make hospital stops? Realizing the egregious error I had made in overlooking these considerations, I began contemplating how I could make it up to him. Earlier, Ben had voiced his concern about the sub-par nature of the coloring books provided after rounds one day. I had myself a look and came to the same conclusion—they were already colored on, and not by an expert like Ben. It occurred to me that a small gesture like bringing some untouched, pristine coloring books and maybe some crisp new crayons would suffice.

Rounding on Christmas Eve brought about the aforementioned confrontation. I had given some coloring books and crayons to the nursing staff with the intention that they would be delivered to him Christmas Day anonymously, but instead Ben received them a day early and clearly knew who it was from. I imagine he interrogated the nursing staff until they buckled. When the team parked outside his room during rounds, not only was Ben uncharacteristically present, but also prepared with feedback. Interrupting rounds, he voiced his concern over the assortment of Disney coloring books: "the crayons are awesome, but these are for babies!" as he revealed the evidence. I reluctantly stepped into the midst of a circle of confused faces and promised to amend the oversight.

The next day I stopped by with some more age- and interest-appropriate material. Ben is quite the connoisseur of coloring books, with a refined taste for only the most desirable coloring fodder: Transformers, racecars, Pixar. Ben was going home soon, and we briefly discussed how his parents had contacted Santa and made the appropriate arrangements for delivery in his absence. He finished out his hospital stay creating masterpieces of Transformers and racecars alike—Disney? What could I have been thinking? I was six once, too.

Ophthalmology encompasses a wide spectrum of patient care modalities, related to vision but encompassing the full spectrum of disciplines. Not only this diversity and interdisciplinary emphasis, but also new and advancing technologies are what attract me to the field. My interaction with Ben is just an example of a diversity of considerations in patient care: the acute medical and surgical aspects, in addition to the humanistic, practical, and long-term care aspects, which I believe are especially conspicuous when dealing with vision, as it is so fundamentally linked to patient health status, daily functioning, and prosperity. I am particularly interested in pursuing a fellowship in pediatric ophthalmology, as I have enjoyed my time working with kids more than any other time spent in the hospital. I enjoy both providing treatment for and interacting with patients across this spectrum of care, and the field of ophthalmology will afford me this opportunity throughout my career and beyond.