

Several themes have emerged in my life that I believe make me well suited for a career in academic ophthalmology: a passion for research, a strong desire to improve the lives of others in a tangible manner, and a fascination with the microscopic.

Ophthalmology is an exciting, technologically advanced, and evolving field that will provide ample opportunities to foster my passion for research. My interest in clinical research began innocently through a summer internship during college at the Minneapolis Heart Institute, where I investigated the incidence of myocardial injury in patients with carbon monoxide poisoning. In the ensuing years my enthusiasm grew as I designed a follow-up study determining long-term predictors of mortality in patients with carbon monoxide poisoning, the results of which were published in JAMA. The excitement of publishing papers, presenting at national conferences, and observing the exchange of ideas among groundbreaking physician-investigators captivated me. During my third year of medical school, my research interests transitioned from cardiology to ophthalmology as I became involved in several projects, including a case report of a long-standing intracorneal foreign body, an investigation of intraocular lens power selection in the second eye of patients undergoing bilateral phacoemulsification, and a cohort study examining the use of antiplatelet medications in patients undergoing surgical procedures for glaucoma.

As my research pursuits shifted, my career interests also began to change. During chart reviews, I felt in awe when reading that a patient had advanced from seeing only hand motions to having 20/20 vision following bilateral cataracts surgery. This sense of elation was reinforced in my third and fourth year clinical rotations, where I interacted with patients whose vision had been restored. Ultimately, my goal is to enter the realm of academic ophthalmology, where I can continue to participate in ground-breaking research and the education of the next generation of physicians as we strive to improve the quality of life for patients.

As an ophthalmologist, I also hope to serve others in a tangible manner, as I have done consistently throughout college and medical school. For example, I volunteered at a youth hostel in Amsterdam, helping to provide shelter, food, and conversation to refugees, homeless teens, and travelers. In medical school, I helped organize a health fair for the homeless, where nearly a hundred homeless women and children attended presentations on nutrition, depression, smoking cessation, hygiene, and prenatal care. Presently, at the Bread of Healing medical clinic in north Milwaukee, I perform history and physicals and establish care plans for individuals who lack insurance. As an ophthalmologist, I will be uniquely poised to impact the lives of others through restoring or preserving vision.

A final theme in my life, relating to my interest in ophthalmology, is an interest in the microscopic. At a young age I developed a fascination for microscopes, and in college I majored in biochemistry, the study of life on the molecular level. In medical school, I had the opportunity to "operate" under a microscope as I dissected out minuscule collateral blood vessels from the myocardium of canines as part of a summer research project investigating the gene expression of two proteins involved in angiogenesis. As a junior medical student I had dozens of opportunities to suture in surgical cases, but my most exciting opportunity was suturing in a blepharoplasty and brow lift on a middle-aged male with ptosis. The complex molecular cascade of the visual pathway, the opportunity to diagnose microscopic pathology using a slit lamp or indirect ophthalmoscope, and the opportunity to perform demanding procedures under a microscope all appeal to my interest in the microscopic.

I am searching for an ophthalmology program that values the same traits I do: a residency that encourages high quality research, a program that is committed to serving their patients, and a hardworking department that possesses an ethos of excellence. A residency that selects me will receive an optimistic, enthusiastic, and intellectually curious individual who will work tirelessly to serve both patients and colleagues.

Excellent!