

Growing up in a small town in Nigeria, West Africa gave me a real life view of a community with limited access to healthcare services, but significant healthcare needs. When I was ten years old my family suffered a great loss. My sister, Ugochi, was born with a health condition that caused her great discomfort and left her unable to sleep well at night. In spite of all efforts to save her - using what healthcare services were available - she died after living for only nine months. The cause of her illness was never determined. Losing her was devastating. This and other experiences helped me recognize the importance people placed in healthcare.

For instance, I remember women in my neighborhood looked forward to announcements about upcoming dates for immunizations. They would flock to the local dispensary with their children for immunizations and check-ups. A government-run institution, the dispensary eventually shut down due to poor management and lack of funding, causing many residents to forgo needed healthcare services. It was heartbreaking to see people using home remedy to treat different health conditions, and witnessing loss of lives due to inadequate access to care. I knew something needed to be done differently, but I had no idea what it was.

When I was 15 years old my mother and I moved to the United States of America, leaving behind my father and four siblings who would join us ten years later. During my college years I participated in several student organizations including Students Exploring and Researching Careers in Health (SEARCH) at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. I also volunteered in the emergency room at a community hospital and shadowed several area physicians in their clinics. Through SEARCH I learned about careers in hospital administration, and went on to earn a graduate degree in health services administration from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Volunteering in the ER and shadowing physicians enriched my appreciation for the importance of a physician in the lives of people, an understanding that began when I was still in Nigeria. With my admission into medical school, I dreamed of building a career in a field that would enable me to care of adults and children with complex health needs.

During my clerkships as a junior medical student I had many memorable experiences. Among my most memorable was taking care of an infant, Rosalin. She was born with cloacal malformation. I could see in the eyes of her parents the terror and anxiety of having to deal with their child's condition for, well the rest of her life. Rosalin always had a smile on her face. Each time I visited her and saw her smiling, I never failed to imagine what life will be like for her as she grows up; mucous fistula on one side, terminal ileal fistula on the other, a single bodily outlet. Taking care of her reminded me of my sister who passed away in infancy, and rekindled my desire to ensure that kids like her live fulfilling lives into adulthood. Furthermore, I have always enjoyed the critical thinking and versatility of internal medicine, and was inspired by my third year medicine clerkship attending physicians, with their impressive abilities to utilize pathophysiology, critical thinking, and laboratory and imaging results in the solving of all forms of medical problems.

Since arriving in this country, I have taken charge of developing myself academically and professionally by remaining engaged, exploring all viable options, and remaining committed to my dream to become a physician. Being faced with the challenge of living in an unfamiliar environment empowered my sense of curiosity, emboldened my desire to excel, and strengthened my foundation of self discipline and perseverance. I have found these qualities to be very valuable through medical school. Borrowing from Robert Frost in his poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, I have "...miles to go before I sleep..." My interest in medicine is drawn from my appreciation of the comprehensive knowledge base it offers. My undergraduate medical education has given me a great foundation to undertake the duties of a physician by using intellectual, diagnostic, and cross-functional teamwork to manage the healthcare of people whose care are entrusted to me. I hope to build on this by training in an organization that affords me the opportunity and challenge to utilize the above tools in caring for patients both in an inpatient and outpatient settings. I look forward to the opportunity to matriculate with your internal medicine residency class of 2011.