

The sun beat down on the asphalt on a hot summer day in Pennsylvania. “One cookie and two lemonades, please.” Requested the woman in the van, as her small children squealed in excitement for the impending treat. “Thank you for supporting the American Cancer Society” I said as I collected the gracious donation. After four years of our “Group Hug” Relay for Life team hosting a pre-relay lemonade stand and yard sale and with over \$10,000 raised for cancer research, this conversation became a staple of my summer experience. While raising money for a worthy charity is certainly rewarding, for me, the greatest honor comes from seeing the smiling faces of the cancer survivors as they walk a memorial lap in their bright purple shirts. Shirts emblazoned boldly with “SURVIVOR”, as if to tell cancer and the world, “I will not go down without a fight”. I personally know cancer hits without discrimination, as my wife’s uncle, my mother-in-law, and my mother now walk that survivor lap. In addition, both my grandmothers had succumbed to this disease and have a luminaria is dedicated to them every year. Annually seeing those impacted by the far-reaching and non-discriminatory effects of cancer, and those who have overcome it, always reinforces I have not only the desire, but also the ability and duty to help others.

Maturity expands your world from a selfish, singular outlook to a more humanistic view. I realized cancer, as well as many other maladies, can and do hit close to home. My desire to help others grew. My parents, computer engineers, helped people, but not directly. Considering others within my family, I realized several were medical personnel – a head nurse of a nursing home, a radiologist, and a gastroenterologist. Yes, these are demanding professions, but these people are known, respected, and trusted in their community – my community. They have a scientific impact, for certain, but also connected with the community in many ways peripheral to medicine. This was intriguing and I craved a greater connection to the world.

While I always envisioned myself in a career that helps others, the decision to pursue a career in medicine was something that solidified gradually. Even as a child, I had a deep interest in science, particularly biology. I spent many hours researching infectious diseases and craved my own microscope. The exotic microscopic world amazed me with such a large impact on all life. However, throughout high school, and even into college, my feelings of inadequacy hindered me from considering medicine. I was an admittedly unremarkable high school student who applied minimal effort, and as a result received equal levels of achievement. I was uncertain my academic abilities could meet the challenge of medical study. Could I succeed in such a rigorous environment, even though my scientific and medical interests were undisputed? By my second undergraduate semester, bolstered by satisfying early test scores, I decided not to hold back, despite the potential for failure and arduous work. I obtained a 4.0 GPA every subsequent semester and graduated summa cum laude in the top two percent of my class. This undergraduate success convinced me I had the ability, intelligence and dedication necessary to pursue a career in medicine. I then matriculated into the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine’s PSTP (Physician Scientist Training Program), a highly competitive program providing formal research training and support for a year of research between MS2 and MS3.

The PSTP provided an array of experiences in rigorous, clinically significant, transitional research. This fortified my theory of science melding with patient care. Throughout my studies, I also shadowed and volunteered with physicians of various disciplines. Perhaps my most

impactful shadowing experience was with a pathologist, Dr. Tae Min. He guided me through his facility and labs with passion for his profession. In one area, I observed a medical technician section, fix, and stain tissue from an infected colon. Dr. Min then examined the prepared slide and made a diagnosis immediately, communicating to surgeons waiting for a response to guide their operation. This simple, efficient, well-coordinated process affirmed my choice of medical study. It was incredible to witness multiple highly skilled professionals working in tandem providing support and treatment for a patient. I knew I wanted to participate in the chain of medical professionals providing high levels of patient care. My experience with Dr. Min was so impactful it set me on the course to Pathology, my planned 2021 residency.

Born in California, I moved to Western Pennsylvania at three, joining my extended family. My and my wife's ancestry dates back to the 1800's here with farmland in Fombell and Cranberry and businesses in Beaver Falls. My parents have retired in Chippewa. I own a home here and hope to gain residency at the University of Pittsburgh. I know the struggles of local founders, business owners and medical personnel. From observing family members, I know medical professionals not only influence community health through patient care, but also through education, support, and communication. I realize the positive impact this has on the entire community and I wish to continue this legacy.