

Personal Statement

General Surgery

Before writing this person statement expressing my ambition and reasoning for my pursuit of a career in surgery I reread an article in the General Surgery News. This article, entitled “Answering the Call” by Dr. David V. Cossman, struck me in a number of ways as it describes the declining state of the surgical profession and how skills achieved through years of hard work have become less and less appreciated. Cossman brings to mind all the negatives tied to a career in surgery; a future lifestyle that is not as easily controlled as other specialties, a lengthy residency program, mounting financial concerns, all in the setting of a healthcare system on the brink of needing life-support. Why would I admit these truths at the beginning of my personal statement? I believe it important to educate myself about all aspects of this profession, both good and bad, and now I will proudly defend my decision to pursue a career in surgery.

I found during my medical school surgery clerkship, as well as through two years of intensive surgical research, that surgery is more than a job. The term vocation more aptly describes the calling physicians must have to save and better lives at all hours of the night; a calling worth sacrificing sleep, money and free time for in order to improve a life. I found myself drawn to this mindset during my third year in medical school. After my eight-week core surgery rotation at the William Beaumont Army Medical Hospital in El Paso, TX, I continued to seek out experiences in surgery while participating in other rotations. Whether that meant taking voluntary trauma call at a level 1 trauma center in the Bronx of New York City during an Internal Medicine rotation, or establishing a working relationship with a local tenen surgeon in Odessa during my Ob/Gyn rotation, I was able to scrub in on numerous procedures as well as continue rounding on pre- and post-op patients, all the while learning valuable surgical pearls such as “fill the tank” and “don’t mess with the pancreas”.

Academically, my love of anatomy found me drawn back to the gross lab the summer after my first year to voluntarily perform prosections. Later, two years of surgical research under the tutelage of a cardiothoracic surgeon and a war surgeon from Kosovo greatly aided in confirming my interests in surgery. My friend, Dr. Besim Hoxha, trained me not only in surgical technique, but also in operating room demeanor and approach. Relating anecdotes from his wartime experiences not only helped me understand the meaning of the surgical “vocation”, but also led us to publish an article about his experiences in Military Medicine this year (June 2008). I am hopeful that during my last few months in medical school I will be able to visit Kosovo and share my research experiences in fluid resuscitation with this newly independent country.

Concerning my career aspirations, I plan on mastering the art of general surgery in the residency program I attend. My ambitions then find me in an academic setting, augmenting a thriving surgical practice with cutting edge molecular physiologic research, while occasionally satisfying my travel lust with medical missions around the world supplying much needed medical care. If I were to choose a specialty at this moment, my leanings are toward vascular, trauma and cardiothoracic surgery. Whether or not any of these avenues are pursued, I cannot wait to become a surgeon!

I have been reading the General Surgery news weekly for about a year now thanks to the advise of Dr. Nicholas Bertha III, D.O., the grandson of my step-grandfather, Dr. Nicholas A. Bertha, M.D. Nick-senior exposed me to two very important aspects of medicine during my youth, medical integrity and the value of a solid work ethic. The most valuable asset I believe I can bring to a surgical residency program is my resolute work ethic. My work ethic has helped me achieve a D.O. degree and a Ph.D. in six years, and will enable me to excel in a surgical residency program. Combined with personal and professional integrity, these are the cornerstones of the character needed to succeed in surgery.