

Often I reflect back and try to trace the source for my passion in medicine. I thankfully never had ailing parents nor was I born into a family of doctors. Rather, I spent my childhood in my native Peru on a dinner table filled with discussions of politics and long theoretical explanations as to the determinants of poverty and disease. Accordingly, I was taught at an early age to analyze and think globally. That said, two self-realizations were instrumental in steering me in the direction of medicine; helping others in need, elicited an incredible feeling of satisfaction and purpose, and being determined and passionate to a particular cause in turn could facilitate any of my future goals. Amidst those discussions and self-discoveries, a love for medicine, and eventually for surgery, was spawned.

As an adolescent residing in Europe, I was introduced to the wonders of science and its impact on the human body. The biology, mathematics and physics courses I took through in French Baccalaureate degree triggered a passion for science, which I continued into university. As an undergraduate I participated in medical related research projects that served to complement what I learned in the classroom. However, it was not until I returned to Peru and witnessed the deplorable living conditions and lack of health education, that I decided to truly embark on the path of a medical career.

My choice for medicine was further reinforced during my rotations at one of the poorest hospitals in Lima. There I was exposed to extreme situations and encountered many indigent patients who had little to no access to imaging or laboratory studies, making an effective diagnosis very difficult. Seeing this challenge, I used my perseverance and tenacity and learned to advocate for my patients' needs, thereby securing for them the best medical care under the most adverse of conditions. I also approached every medical case with humility and with the endurance needed to strategically find the appropriate treatment for each patient. During this time, I closely collaborated with experienced doctors and surgeons and began to develop an appreciation for the skillful use of my hands in performing critical, life-saving procedures. Through this I cultivated an insatiable desire to learn and perfect the necessary skills to succeed in the surgical field.

During one of my rotations in the surgical ward, I was assigned an elderly Andean woman who had pancreatic cancer and was scheduled for a modified Whipple procedure. She had misinterpreted her jaundice and abdominal pain believing it to be a result of harvesting her small parcel of land in the highlands. Living four hours walking distance from the nearest medical center, speaking only Quechua, and having no formal education, she was unable to seek medical attention sooner. As I began the pre- and post-operative treatments and assisted in the surgical procedures, I realized that surgery allows me to combine my passion for general medical sciences with the practical, hands-on training to help a patient's recovery process. After the Andean woman was discharged, I continued to monitor her health and provide her with comfort and support even when she later developed pancreatic cancer and underwent chemotherapy treatment. This highlighted the sheer importance and value of physician-patient dynamic in ensuring the patient's well being.

Based from this eye-opening experience, I engaged in volunteer surgical missions in some of the most remote and poverty stricken areas of Peru, and in the process meet with and learned from medical professionals from all over the world. I also took the initiative to volunteer and carry-out observerships in Argentina, France and the United States. The experiences I gained living in these and various other countries have taught me the importance of adaptability and engendered an acute sensitivity and understanding of diverse cultures, a necessary quality for any physician.

Through your program, I intend to continue my education in public health and acquire the necessary train to evolve as a surgeon. My ultimate goal is to be a health care advocate in my country through the invaluable surgical training and skills I acquire at your institution. Later I strive to assume a teaching position in Peru, where I can share my knowledge and training with the country's aspiring physicians. By tackling education and health care advocacy on the macro level, I sincerely hope to help Peru overcome the considerable inequities of its present health care system. Therefore, through the volunteer and global medical training I have undertaken, patients who I have treated, and inspirational medical professionals I have encountered, I am excited to take my medical career to the next level and direct all my energy to fulfilling my life-long goal of being an outstanding surgeon.