

While my aptitude for the sciences and ability to use precision tools and technologies were critical considerations in my decision to become a dentist, it is the desire to do work which serves a meaningful social purpose that is my overriding inspiration. My choice of extracurricular involvements has been guided by this inspiration and among them, leading two subgroup dental outreach teams in Oaxaca, Mexico, has stood out in highlighting my desire to obtain advanced clinical training. These assignments (at Santa Lucia and San Pedro El Alto) were each for only a few weeks, but they profoundly impacted me by exposing me to the drastic toll that inadequate dental care has on marginalized populations. The lack of facilities, practitioners and equipment combined with a poor diet and inattention to oral hygiene to cause a high incidence of dental problems; many of the villagers suffered from pain and infection due to cavities that had progressed severely and the extraction of multiple teeth was a routine procedure. The expensive treatments and restorative procedures that are commonplace in our society were generally not an option and living without teeth or coping with oral diseases and dental issues was just a fact of life. This reality heightened my awareness of the paramount importance of care for underserved populations and my experiences in Oaxaca reaffirmed my reasons for pursuing a general postdoctoral residency. That is, I will not only command expertise in complicated cases involving endodontic, prosthodontic, implant and oral surgery techniques, but will also be involved in preventive care. Providing care to children is specifically essential in this regard because relatively small interventions such as risk assessment, the early detection of caries, fluoride treatment, nutritional supplementation, and instruction in oral care generate a lifetime of benefits. As a general practitioner I expect to be called upon to be an educator, child advocate, role model and family friend, which will afford me opportunities to collaborate with community representatives and healthcare professionals in outreach work and programming. I have determined that providing continuity of care to inner city or underserved populations in this broad capacity is the role I wish to play in delivering care to my patients.

The volunteer and work experiences I have accumulated over the past seven years demonstrate that I have the range of interpersonal skills that general practice requires. They include doing outreach work on a First Nations reserve in British Columbia, an endeavour which aimed to bridge the cultural gap between non-aboriginal and aboriginal Canadians; advising international students about educational and career choices for a consulting firm; being a DJ for a live, interactive community co-op radio program for teenagers; giving companionship to the elderly at a care facility; and

mentoring junior dental students as a member of the student dental association. In these positions I have been complimented on my warm and personable communication style, my quick responsiveness to people's needs and concerns, and my competencies as a team player, leader and advisor. My patience and gentleness have also been commented on, affirming my ability to calm patients in distress and earn their trust. Further, my cross-cultural sensitivity augments the rapport I am able to build with patients, families and colleagues and will enable me to identify economic, social or religious issues which are pertinent to my practice.

My well-rounded character reflects an additional, and compelling, motivation for my choice of residency. I was initially drawn to dentistry because it blended science and art in addition to being of fundamental value to society. Performing dental procedures engages my talent for executing delicate tasks with my hands, while acquiring and applying scientific knowledge fulfills my love of learning. Attaining advanced training in general practice will allow me to exercise these abilities at the highest level and, in so doing, to flourish professionally. I know that I will enjoy the team dynamics of the clinical environment and thrive on the challenges of having to work under time constraints, be adept at a variety of techniques, and respond quickly in situations of emergency. Finally, my clinical placements have given me a glimpse of the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that I will gain from general practice on a daily basis – be it through relieving pain and discomfort, enhancing patients' self-esteem, participating in an inner-city dental intervention, supporting junior dentists, or just teaching children healthy oral habits.

In closing, I wish to emphasize that I have put considerable forethought into assessing that I have the clarity of purpose, discipline, and dedication to become an outstanding general practitioner. The skills and attributes detailed above qualify me as a desirable candidate for the program and I very much look forward to the clinical training I will undergo as a general postdoctoral resident.