

Becoming a doctor is more than a professional goal to me—it is a calling that reflects who I am and who I want to be. I am dedicated to learning and doctors are students for life, continually broadening their knowledge of medicine, technology, and science. I have a love for passing on knowledge that has meaning to others, and doctors are teachers, sharing information and ideas that make a difference in patients' lives. I am stimulated by a puzzle that is challenging to figure out, and doctors are detectives, chasing elusive diagnoses and testing out theories of treatment. I have a sensitive nature, and doctors are counsellors, giving guidance, and support to patients and their families as they can. I believe in the human potential for health in all its aspects, and doctors are healers, helping patients to live higher quality lives or find peace in the face of a debilitating condition. Finally, I am a fighter who rises to a challenge, and doctors are soldiers on the front lines of medicine, defending the welfare of those in their charge. In being all these things as a doctor, I will fulfill my potential and touch people's lives in a profound way.

Although my education in the sciences at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels is prerequisite to my future studies in medicine, I consider my strength of character to be my strongest asset as a candidate for medical school. The personal challenges I have overcome in my life are a testament to the perseverance, dedication, and maturity with which I pursue my goals. I encountered a major stumbling block on my path to becoming a doctor when I was 18 and in my second year of undergraduate studies. My family had moved to Canada two years before, and I had thrived in my new environment, graduating from high school with an A average and maintaining it in my first year at the University of British Columbia. However, in the middle of my second year my parents went through an acrimonious divorce, and I had to deal with my mother's distress and help her to raise my two brothers, then aged six and seven. The next few years were emotionally trying and highly stressful, and my GPA suffered because I did not have enough time to study. When I graduated my average did not reflect my abilities, but I persisted in believing I could still earn admittance into medical school and fulfill my dream of becoming a doctor. Consequently, I moved away from home to pursue my Masters of Science in Kinesiology. This presented me with a new challenge in that I had to support myself while I studied, so I worked as a research assistant, a teaching assistant, and a private science tutor. As I approach the end of this endeavour, I am extremely proud of my excellent performance at both work and school, and anticipate graduating with a GPA of 3.88. My focus has been on biochemistry, and I am currently writing my thesis, which aims to provide further insight into rational drug design for heart failure. The results of the research conducted for this project—which I did in collaboration with two laboratory colleagues—was published in *Physiological Genomics* in March 2005. Being able to make a contribution to medicine, albeit a small one, gave me much satisfaction, and I took pride in doing a presentation about this project.

The dedication which has motivated me to fulfill my academic aspirations and not give up on myself is an intrinsic quality. As such, it is also evident in other areas of my life, particularly the professional ethic I am developing. When I volunteered as companion to the elderly at a hospital geriatric unit and a

nursing home I came to appreciate the value of genuine communication and interaction with my 'patients'. I learned the magic of being an empathetic listener as the seniors shared their stories, ideas, and complaints with me. Many felt psychologically healthier just because I gave them validation, kindness, patience and respect. I learned the value of these qualities in seeing how they enabled me to include my 'patients' in decision making and treat them with dignity in uncomfortable situations. Ultimately, it is who I am and my regard for the dignity of my patients as people which will distinguish me as a physician.

The satisfaction I gained from working with the seniors actually intensified my desire to become a doctor. I was a first and second year undergrad at that time, and realized that the pursuit of scientific knowledge was more meaningful to me when I applied it within a human context. This conviction became clear to me again as a grad student, when I had the amazing experience of looking at the results of an experiment and knowing I had discovered a piece of information which furthered knowledge in a small area of science. Yet, for me, helping people directly delivers a more lasting and worthwhile reward, and the work of a laboratory scientist seems to be distant and cold in contrast.

Being a companion to the elderly has also allowed me to gain an awareness of an essential truth about medicine: it is not always about curing illnesses, alleviating pain, and saving lives. Rather, it is about upholding principles of care, including the imperative to listen to what patients say, acknowledge their circumstances, and refrain from passing personal judgments. Medical expertise will be my foundation as a doctor, but I will always retain the humanistic aspect of medicine, which will allow my patients to feel relaxed and trusting in my care.

Additionally, my work experience has contributed significantly to my maturity and confidence as a candidate for medical school. As a teaching assistant and private science tutor I was able to articulate concepts to students in a way they could understand and to deal calmly and effectively with students' demands and complaints. I gained analytical competence as a research assistant at Simon Fraser University's Cardiac Membrane Research Laboratory and as a summer research student at the BC Research Institute for Children's and Women's Health. My ability to adjust to the unpredictable and exacting nature of lab work will be of benefit to me as a medical student and as a doctor. Furthermore, the various positions I have held demonstrate that I function well as a team player but can also assume responsibility well in an independent or leadership role.

As I look to my future in medicine, Hong Kong University stands out as my first choice among schools. It is unlike many other universities in that its medical school introduces students to clinical practice early in the program and includes special-study modules that allow students to further explore their areas of

interest. I will also excel in the program's curriculum of student-centred, problem-based and integrated study, as I am as a self-motivated and eager learner. The university is known for exposing students to a variety of healthcare environments in the community, and I will welcome the opportunity to explore them. Finally, I have chosen HKU because I grew up in Hong Kong and would like to work there when I become a doctor.

I have proven to myself that I can deal with the challenges and rigors of medical school and that I have the right character to be a doctor. As a physician, I know I will be compassionate yet detached, personal yet professional, and instructional yet non-judgmental. I believe that the intrinsic qualities of character I bring to medical school are such that no amount of education can teach them and no amount of money can buy them. However, it is only in person that my passion for medicine and the integrity of my intent to become a doctor can be truly gauged. I would be honoured to showcase my potential at an interview.