

## Seeing the Future Radiologist Within Me

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What if I just try it one more time?" I wondered to myself at 1:30 AM one year before entering medical school.

I was in a pin-droppingly quiet laboratory as I reviewed the latest numbers I collected on the size of the tumors beneath the skin of mice. The cancers were malicious and stubborn. They defied the models and theories behind normal cellular growth, boasting an evolved and sophisticated defense mechanism against even the most toxic drugs launched against them. Feeling challenged, I flipped through countless pages of experimental notes yet again—only this time I spotted a subtle trend in the results that had concealed itself until that very moment.

Indulging in the discovery of subtle clues, seemingly imperceptible details, and easily overlooked signs has led me to many scientific mysteries during my graduate studies and my employment at a pharmaceutical company. For this reason, I chose to enter medical school with my sights on radiology as my future career.

While studying anatomy during the first semester of medical school, I quickly fell in love with the intricate and flawless design of the human body. Every muscle, ligament, tendon, nerve, artery, and vein are seamlessly aligned to provide synchronous functionality. What truly astonished me, however, was the ability to visualize all of these enclosed machineries and expose their state of condition without making a single incision to the integument. I found myself scanning the lines and curves incessantly, looking for messages buried behind the flat screen. I knew then that the study of radiology was for me.

The ability to not only cooperate effortlessly in a team environment but also to work proficiently in an autonomous setting will continue to allow me to thrive as an effective member of a radiology team. During clinical rotations, my decision to pursue the study of radiology was reinforced even through my family medicine, internal medicine, surgery, and neurology rotations. I helped to search for consolidations on a chest radiograph, discovered kidney stones and gallstones, found loops of dilated bowels

on computed tomographic images, and located a mass demonstrated by magnetic resonance imaging that explained headache and vision impairment. Witnessing the crucial integration of radiology into all aspects of medicine motivates me to become a physician that will make a difference through important imaging-based diagnoses.

That early morning the year before becoming a medical student, I stayed up and worked on the 121st drug combination beneath the skin of mice and began my 264th experiment in the 547th day since the research project began. Perseverance finally paid off. Two weeks later, the tumors started to dwindle as our new drug combination penetrated through the tenacious barriers shielding the cancer. Akin to medical research, radiology requires meticulousness and diligence while offering limitless opportunities to study scientific queries and explore clinical mysteries that correlate seamlessly with my personality, interests, and career aspiration.

I was fortunate to know what my specialty interest was early on; however, many students explore a variety of specialties before coming to an informed decision. To arrive at that 'aha!' moment, it is important to go into each clinical rotation with an open mind and positive attitude. Attending physicians and residents often engage in a teaching dialogue that extends beyond the immediate clinical situation into future career development. Key insights and individual opinions shared during these times are invaluable for guiding students' decision-making process. In addition, researching the characteristics of each specialty through books, reference materials, and online sources allows oneself to identify the right academic, career, and personal fit before delving into the extensive path of residency training.

Selecting a medical specialty is more than meets the eye—it requires one to look inside oneself and realize where one's passion truly lies. Luckily for me, I did not require x-ray vision to discover my passion for radiology. (doi:10.7556/jaoa.2016.124)

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