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My White Coat

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My White Coat

Shmuel Goldfeyz

As I sit under this huge white tent with hundreds of people around me, anxiously waiting to be called up to receive my white coat, I look back at all the hard work and effort it took to reach this spot.

It all started with the dream of becoming a physician. Various experiences throughout my childhood and early adulthood led me to choose this arduous path. When I completed high school, I knew that the first hurdle to overcome would be college.

I remember my apprehension when I started college a few years ago - I wondered what lay ahead, as I began the long journey to becoming a physician: Will I make it? Will I survive the rigors of learning chemistry, biology, and organic chemistry - all difficult subjects - while maintaining a competitive GPA?

After attending a week of orientations, I finally sat down with my advisors to choose my first semester courses and map out the next few years. My first semester flew by, as did the next few years, but with every new semester came new challenges and obstacles, and the pressure to succeed mounted. On one particular occasion, I remember leaving a chemistry final exam panicking - I thought that I had failed - only to find out a few weeks later that I did just fine. Meanwhile, I began volunteering, shadowing, and gaining as much exposure as possible to the field of medicine to ensure that it was the right path for me. Ultimately, all my experiences—helping people, observing physicians, and conducting research—made me more and more passionate about becoming a physician.

As college came to an end, I faced the next daunting hurdle: the “dreaded” MCAT. I sat down and reviewed all the material that I learned over the past few years—a seemingly infinite amount of information. I spent a few weeks studying and reviewing the material over and over until the day of the test. I took the MCAT, and then the next step began: applying to schools while anxiously waiting for the results. I spent hours filling out applications and writing personal

statements. Finally, after tweaking and revamping its contents seemingly hundreds of times, I submitted my application. Thankfully, I received a slew of emails from prospective schools instructing me to fill out secondary applications, asking for more personal statements and information. After completing these, the next stage began: waiting and hoping for an interview.

After interviewing, I apprehensively waited to see if I was accepted. Day by day, I checked my email hoping to find a letter of acceptance. When it finally came, I could not believe it! My family and friends, who had been so supportive all throughout this process, congratulated me on my success and reassured me that I will make a great doctor.

The euphoria of acceptance quickly changed into fear and panic as I realized how much I needed to do to prepare for medical school; though as orientation day neared, my excitement resumed. It was time to meet my new colleagues—the people with whom I will be spending the next four years of my life.

Again, my fears from college crept back into my mind: Will I make it? Will I be able to survive the rigors of learning anatomy and histology in only three months? If I’m not at the top of the class, will I still be a competent doctor?

Orientation week came and went and before I knew it, I was sitting in the lecture hall, listening to an anatomy lecture. All of a sudden a realization sank in and I thought to myself, “I’m actually in medical school. I made it. I will soon be a doctor.” Anatomy lab began and I was introduced to my cadaver: my very first patient. What I learned from this patient would form a foundation of knowledge that I would build on throughout medical school. I made the first incision with care and caution, so as to not injure my patient. Little by little, as I dissected deeper into my patient I thought to myself, “This is the human body—the most amazing and intricate ‘machine’—and I have the privilege to learn as much as I can in order to help when things go awry.”

So as I sit here in this white tent, with rain pouring down, listening to the voice of the speaker as he recites the Hippocratic Oath, I smile to myself and appreciate all the accomplishments and sacrifices I made to get where I am today. The journey was long and arduous. Indeed, it seemed like a never ending process: after overcoming one hurdle another would inevitably appear. There were even a few times when I asked myself, "Is this all worth it?" However, with every hurdle that I overcame, I became stronger in my resolve and more passionate about medicine. But now, as I am ready to accept my white coat, I am faced with new questions: What does this white coat represent? What kind of responsibilities do I now possess?

This white coat is my rite of passage and is an initiation into a professional identity. With this white coat donned, people will now respect what I say and I have

the responsibility to make sure what I tell them is correct. I have a responsibility to help any person no matter what ethnic group, race, or belief. I have a responsibility to be honest, sincere, professional, and compassionate. I have a responsibility to learn as much as I can in order to be the most competent doctor I can be.

We each have our journey, our excitements, our pitfalls, our ups and our downs. Whichever path we each took to get here was the right one. The next time we don our white coats, we should take a moment to reflect on the hard work that brought us here. We should not only realize that the road ahead will have the bumps and obstacles just as the road that brought us here, but also have faith in our abilities to overcome those hardships. We made it this far, and we will each continue to pave our path in the road we call life.



New York Cityscape
Paul Janoian