

Why College Is Important to Me

by Kevin Yang

I vividly remember my first superhero. At age three, I visited Grandpa's office in Taiwan. I tinkered with instruments on his desk and stared at posters of organs as he saw his patients. I was awed by Grandpa's career. After a summer dissection camp in fifth grade, I fell in love with medicine. While other kids were grossed out by the messy anatomies of various animals, I was fascinated. I was determined to become a surgeon someday. I wanted to become a healer just like Grandpa, and I was going to go to medical school to achieve that goal. Medicine ran in my blood.

I also vividly remember my first impression of suffering. Chris and I were inseparable best friends, but there was a problem. Chris had a disturbing inability to read others' emotions. He was oblivious to irritation or fury. Chris vexed me to no end, but I dismissed his troubling behavior. I was oblivious to why my classmates ostracized him. Instead, I gradually distanced myself from him. One day, my family moved away and I never saw him again. Two years later, I was hit with the startling realization that Chris had autism.

As I grew older, I became more aware of the suffering surrounding me. I started to notice the toll that my mother's migraines had on my own family when she lay incapacitated in bed with unbearable pain every month. Motivated, I immersed myself in medicine. As a hospital volunteer, I stood outside the rooms of the terminally ill or dying, unable to fulfill my fantasy of single-handedly bringing them back to full health. I yearned for the higher education that would enable me. I hoped to someday join the ranks of miracle workers – the doctors and

nurses who could heal and give hope. As an intern at UC Davis Medical Center, I was inspired by a different aspect of medicine, the connection between science and applied cures. Working on HIV gene therapy, I admired the researchers working to cure millions of people, and their passion was contagious. Medical research will ultimately cure the suffering, and college will be my gateway to life-impacting research by connecting me with necessary resources.

Grandpa passed away from diabetes two years ago, but his memory lives on. I don't yet have enough knowledge to alleviate the arbitrary agony inflicted on the people I love, but college will be the indispensable foundation I need for a career in medicine. When I think of medicine, I am frustrated mostly by its inability to cure the incurable before it has caused too much pain. I want to change that, whether by researching cures for diseases or by healing patients in clinical practice. I want to carry on Grandpa's legacy, and higher education will be my first step to taking his place as world-saving superhero.