

## RESIDENCY PERSONAL STATEMENT

Small changes today make all the difference tomorrow. That is what I love about pediatrics. Early intervention in a child's life can put them on the right path to a successful healthy future.

My pediatrics rotation began in the new born nursery. In one day I was transformed. Upon holding my first newborn, baby Johnny, I realized that there was so much to learn from him. One of my responsibilities was to help collect blood for the newborn screen. It was not until 2 weeks later, when I saw baby Johnny in clinic that I realized the importance of this task. The newborn screen detected that baby Johnny has congenital hypothyroidism. Explaining the results to Mom was one of the more rewarding experiences of my medical training. We discussed the physiology of the thyroid gland and its necessity to normal development. Mom was anxious and it was apparent that she was unable at that time to comprehend what I was teaching her. An alternative approach was necessary. I asked her about her concerns and what she was afraid of. She admitted she was overwhelmed and feared that she had done something to cause this condition. I made clear to Mom that she had nothing to do with baby Johnny's hypothyroidism. Relieved, Mom proceeded to ask several questions about the thyroid and we reviewed its function and the necessity of daily administration of thyroid replacement and close follow up with the clinic were re-emphasized. This time, Mom understood.

That night, I reviewed the various causes of congenital hypothyroidism and found various resources that would be helpful to Mom. I telephoned her one week later to see how she and baby Johnny were doing and to share the resources I had discovered. I was happy to hear that Johnny was doing well and Mom understood the importance of regular follow-up and compliance with the medication.

Several months later, I ran into Johnny and his Mom. Johnny was now 6 months old and appeared developmentally normal. He smiled, played with a toy and was beginning to babble. Mom was proud to report that she had read up on signs and symptoms of hypo and hyperthyroidism and she was constantly monitoring to make sure Johnny was properly responding to therapy.

This experience taught me that being a great doctor is in part about being a great teacher. The challenge of educating patients and their families in the context of cultural nuances, preexisting medical beliefs, and emotional hardship has been gratifying. I look forward to continuing to be challenged, both academically and emotionally in residency. Increasing my patient responsibilities with integrative teaching rounds, case conferences, lecture series and journal clubs excites me. Currently I am not sure whether I want to pursue a career in general pediatrics or specialize. I am excited to explore all of my options and start each new rotation with enthusiasm and an open mind.

When I think about baby Johnny, I realize that even though he was not yet able to talk, he was an excellent teacher. Not only did I learn about hypothyroidism, but I also learned about the importance of primary prevention. The newborn screen was just the beginning. Patient education and proper follow-up are essential components to successful patient management. Thanks to Johnny, and all the young patients I've

seen since, I am confident that my future is in pediatrics.