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What if people lived healthier lives, practiced preventive medicine, and took precautions against illness and disease? My days in the physical therapy department often made me think about the prevention of injuries as well as the injuries themselves. I was already doubting my future career choice as a physical therapist. Although I loved the science of it and helping people, the lack of variety within the field and its limited options for growth bothered me. I needed a career that helped a large number of people, emphasized prevention and primary care rather than tertiary care, and would continually challenge and motivate me to improve. Knowing that I really did not want to pursue physical therapy as I had originally planned, my thoughts wandered to the area of public health, particularly health management.

My first true introduction to the public health arena came in a class offered through the Big U School of Public Health. As I listened to experts speak about contemporary health issues, I was intrigued. The world of “capitation,” “rationing of care,” and Medicaid fascinated me as I saw the range of problems that public health professionals were trying to solve in innovative ways. This one semester class provided me with a basic but thorough understanding of the issues faced in health care today. In the last two years I have continued to learn about public health both through coursework and work in the field.

Because field experience is such a valuable learning tool, I searched for a research assistant position that would allow me to view public health at a different level. I worked on a project at a county health clinic in Englewood, a low-income, minority community. The program attempted to increase treatment compliance rates for adolescents diagnosed with tuberculosis who must complete a six-month medical program. Working for the county exposed me to a different side of health care that I had previously seen. Service and organization were not assets of the county and yet its role in the public health “ecosystem” was and is critical. Its job of immunizing thousands and interacting with all members of the community is often forgotten, but is important for keeping an entire community healthy.

My work at the county health clinic as well as my knowledge of some areas of public health led me to accept an internship in Washington D.C. this past summer. The internship provided me with a greater understanding of a federal public health agency’s operations and allowed me to contribute in a variety of ways to the XYZ Department in which I worked. Most importantly I worked on “policy issues” which involved identifying and summarizing problems that were out of the ordinary as well as documenting resolved issues in order to establish protocols to increase the department’s efficiency. In addition I served on a scientific review panel which was responsible for editing a seventy-page proposed regulation before its submission.

Along with my duties at XYZ, I attended seminars and met with public health leaders at different functions and events. All these activities confirmed my growing interest in preventive medicine, outcomes and effectiveness, and quality of care, particularly within the private/managed care sector. These are my strongest interests because I

believe they are fundamental to our nation's health. We must achieve efficiency and access without sacrificing quality.

The University of _____ would help me achieve my goals of furthering my public health education through the specialize coursework offered as part of its health administration program.

Since rejecting physical therapy as a career possibility my interest in public health has only grown. I welcome the challenge of serving a large community and participating in such a dynamic and challenging field. What if an aspirin a day could prevent heart attacks? What if abandoning unnecessary procedures saved thousands of dollars, which then allowed a hospital to treat other patients needing care? What if every person was guaranteed care and that care was good? I would like to find answers for these questions during my career as a public health graduate student and professional.