

Sample Essay 1  
Written for Matriculation in 2009

The wee hours of the morning were passing, but I was wide-awake. I was shadowing in the Duke Emergency Department as a young sickle cell patient arrived. We scrambled while her sickle cell crisis turned into a cardiac arrest and a code, as compressions were applied and finally withdrawn. Her passing was not unexpected, but its suddenness amidst the bustle of the trauma bays was still a shock to her family, who accompanied us. It was then that I fully grasped the necessity of the work in which I am involved: the intertwined efforts of the emergency department, the sickle cell clinic, and the research lab collectively constitute a promise and a lifeline to our current and future patients—my patients.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:29 PM

**Comment:** Great opening vignette. It grabs your attention, is compelling and passionate.

While the challenges of sickle cell disease were laid raw in the ED, I draw hope from my other encounters with sickle cell patients. Just a few days later, as a middle-aged woman consented to letting me draw a few extra vials of blood for our sickle cell study, she declared, "I'm doing this for my grandkids." The fact that this particular patient was here in the Duke sickle cell clinic in middle age, looking to the future, was a milestone for how far medicine has come—the shortened life expectancy of sickle cell disease patients is now extended a decade with proper medical care.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:31 PM

**Comment:** Good connection with opening vignette. Shows continuation of work with sickle cell disease.

These diverse patient encounters have inspired me to pursue community-based work, to seek a global perspective on medicine and health, and to find answers to key medical questions in the laboratory. I am motivated to work particularly on prevention activities. With the American Red Cross, I introduced the first certified Spanish-language CPR and First Aid education program in Durham, North Carolina, while learning to coordinate between organizations in two languages. My clinical phlebotomy skills from work at North Kansas City Hospital have enabled me to assist in providing cholesterol, glucose and other screening tests for preventive campaigns. With the Durham Latino Health Fair and the University of North Carolina School of Medicine-based Proyecto Puentes de Salud [Project Health Bridges] in Juventino Rosas, Mexico, I have performed screenings, built clinical acumen and understanding of how a successful community-based medical screening project is carried out. Through Proyecto Puentes de Salud, I learned the impact of immigration on health habits, identified patients needing clinical follow-up, and addressed the challenges of rural mental depression. These projects have given me understanding and awareness of health risks that will affect my patients before they become chronic or emergent conditions.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:32 PM

**Comment:** Good use of action verb.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:32 PM

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Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:32 PM

**Comment:** Another good action verb.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:33 PM

**Comment:** Good action verb.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:34 PM

**Comment:** Good action verb.

This community-based work has also shown me the depth of need in global health issues throughout the United States and elsewhere. During classes in global health and my study in the cities and biological research stations of Costa Rica, I have probed the intimate relationship between human health and environmental and ecological factors, as well as challenges in access to health care. As Service and Social Justice Director for the Duke Catholic Student Center, I am helping coordinate service with Habitat for Humanity and other agencies, participating in campaigns for hunger relief and pregnancy support services, and learning what it means to live a compassionate life. I am discovering the context of global health challenges and the many ways we can motivate ourselves and others to meet these needs. For me, the social inequity in access to basic health-related services is among the most profound challenges of my generation, and I am prepared to make it the focus of my practice.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:34 PM

**Comment:** Lessons learned described.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:34 PM

**Comment:** Good transition.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:35 PM

**Comment:** This applicant is "showing" what he has done to participate in the medical field.

My research and scholarship have also been meaningful ways to contribute to the medical community. Through my laboratory research on the impact of erythrocyte microRNA expression in sickle cell disease and malaria parasite invasion, I am helping to pave the way for innovative diagnostics and therapeutic targets for these diseases, based on a new generation of understanding of nucleic acids. Most importantly for me, I am gaining the theoretical and technical skill necessary to better incorporate the ramifications of these key laboratory tools into clinical practice through the upcoming introduction of genotyping, arrays, and PCR-based tests.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:36 PM

**Comment:** Good transition paragraph which describes interest in research.

The experiences and skills I have gained in the clinic and the emergency department, my work in community health, in biology and global health classrooms, and my laboratory research and practice have built a strong foundation for me to begin medical education. Through this work, I have learned to lead and motivate teams to diligently serve health care needs. By offering health screenings and working closely with clinics, I have developed meticulous skills to assess the scientific and social ramifications of disease, its treatment and prevention. Most importantly, my personal experiences as a phlebotomist and patient advocate have shown me the need for empathy, to reach out to a diversity of patients in every state of health and empower them to improve their situation. I am now ready to move into a new role, to become part of the next generation of medical students and physicians, and to provide comprehensive health care access for the kinds of patients I already serve.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:37 PM

**Comment:** Applicant is describing what he has learned and why it is important.

Dan Scheirer 1/3/10 4:38 PM

**Comment:** Excellent summary (concluding) paragraph. It includes many action verbs, is passionate and succinctly states his readiness to become a medical student.