

Personal Statement

Spencer Seballos

Early in medical school I shadowed in the emergency department for the first time. Though initially it seemed like chaotic mayhem, I soon began to see how it was an intricately choreographed performance, with each participant – from nurses to respiratory therapists to many others – playing a unique, important role. It reminded me of my pre-medical school life as a mariachi trumpeter: instead of following the written music verbatim, I listened to the other musicians for cues, like when to hold a note if the vocalist sustains a note longer than written in the music. Just like a live mariachi performance, emergency medicine (EM) is a team effort that must accommodate for the unexpected. In my career, I want to be able to make a difference in the lives of others, and function as part of a highly competent team. I saw that EM could give me this opportunity. At my school, I continued to explore my interests in EM through leadership of our school's ultrasound interest group. The group was in its second year, and because our school did not have a dedicated ultrasound curriculum at the time, I led the planning for a day-long ultrasound training workshop for medical students across the region, the first "Ultrafest Cleveland" event. After my third year rotations, my interest in EM was firmly cemented due to the diversity of patients, pathologies and procedures, combined with the increased acuity. I am committed to being an academic emergency physician, a role in which I can be a team member, learner, teacher and role model in my community.

My medical school, the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine (CCLCM), is a 5-year program aimed at training future academic physicians. The curriculum includes two 10-week research blocks (basic and clinical sciences) and a research thesis year after third year core clerkships. I chose CCLCM because of my desire to integrate research into my future career. CCLCM provides me with robust research training, with classes in biostatistics, epidemiology, and research methods/design; journal clubs; and monthly research seminars during our third through fifth years. After my first year, I dove into research with Dr. Michael Phelan, an EM physician whose interests lie in improving patient safety and quality. Over the past couple years, he has mentored me on several projects, including blood sample hemolysis, HIV testing, and how the homeless population utilizes emergency services. I received a 2019-20 SAEM Foundation/Residents and Medical Students research grant related to a project on blood sample hemolysis, which has resulted in a manuscript currently under review. As part of this grant, I

participated in a workshop in Bethesda which furthered my interests in academic EM: I gained not just feedback on my individual project, but also learned from older academic EM physicians about what their careers entailed. These robust research experiences have provided me with stepping stones from which I can launch my future career.

Academic EM is also appealing due to the opportunities to teach medical students, residents and other team members. Before medical school, I was a Fulbright grantee to Laos, where I taught English at the national medical school. The teaching skills I developed have proven useful in medical school, whether in teaching classmates in problem-based learning sessions, or in leading sessions on physical activity and nutritious eating at a local Hispanic community center. As part of my school's Diversity Dinner series, I have also presented about my own Spanish-Filipino heritage and how health care professionals can provide better care to Hispanic patients. Teaching has also played an important role in other ways I have given back to my community while in medical school. For two years, I was a weekly in-classroom math tutor at a Cleveland public middle school that had several Spanish-speaking students who had emigrated from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. During one break between difficult geometry problems, the students were curious about why, if I was a doctor ("haha, no not yet!"), was I coming to work in their school for free? Because I had been given so much, and it was my responsibility to pay it forward. In my future career as an academic EM physician, I want to play a similar role, using my cultural and language skills to provide better care for patients, as well as working collaboratively, learning continually, teaching, and being a role model in my community.