What better place to start than at the beginning. The first step in our long path to becoming doctors is Gross Anatomy. It is our first class in medical school, and the cadavers that we dissect are often called our first patients. They are also called our silent teachers. We learned more from them than any professor’s lecture or any picture in a textbook could ever teach us. Studying our cadaver was not like reading words on a page or looking at an image on a screen. It was actual personal interaction with a human being, a human being that so generously donated their body so that we could learn. When that person died, it was one life lost, but in their death, they have given life to countless other people, and they have done that will be a help to all those that we serve. The tremendous amount of knowledge we gain from our silent teachers is the first step in our pursuit and our conviction to become protectors of life. We must always continue to learn, for there is no limit to our abilities, but it is important to never forget where we began, and those who helped us along the way.

---

Golden Globes  
Jordan Rogers, Class of 2012

I love watching awards shows. Gaudy outfits, millionaires, mindless entertainment: what more could a person want? My life consists of none of the aforementioned things and all of us like to leave the realms of reality every once in awhile. No, my life is not an awards show. There are deadlines, truckloads of information, disgruntled professors, even a few token neurotic colleagues. Anxiety, an old friend of mine, enjoys paying me regular visits. I even find it lying in bed with me when tossing and turning for fifteen minutes somehow turns into all night. Yes, my life is very real.

Funny, but this reality is all I have ever wanted or dreamed of doing. Don’t get me wrong, on those sleepless nights I sometimes let my mind wander to what other people my age are doing with their lives right now. Making money? Going out to eat? Coming home at five and being done for the day? Having a social life? I can assure you they are not up until eleven on any given night pouring over “The Proper Technique of the Prostate Exam.” At least for their sake I hope not.

Yet, I wouldn’t be anywhere else in the world. Why? Because no one can help my patients the way I will be able to. And it would be a tragedy to leave the people who are meant to be in my care up to someone else. No amount of sleepless night will hold me back from the care I can give someone someday. At some point I will save someone’s life. And they will be very glad I hung in there.

I can compare medical school, then, to my Golden Globe. Since it is the pinnacle of my hard work, and it took a struggle to get here, it is a fitting analogy. Even after winning the award, there is always work ahead. Yet, acceptance into medical school was the universe giving me a pat on the back and saying, “Yes you can. You are working hard enough. Keep going.” The universe and the Screen Actors Guild, same difference, right?

We don’t get to make acceptance speeches after getting into medical school, but we should. At least, I know I didn’t get here alone. I can’t thank a producer or co-star, but I can thank one very important woman. My mom made my dream reachable. Even if the universe wasn’t going to say it, my mom over and over said “Yes you can. You are working hard enough. Keep going.” Not everyone has a biggest fan. I do.
Hic locus est ubi mors gaudet succurrere vitae. “This is the place where death delights to help the living.” As a student of Florida State University’s College of Medicine Class of 2012, I recently learned this lesson. Although not an idea tested on in my Clinical Anatomy class, this lesson was taught through my professor’s guidance, letters from family members about their loved ones, and my own firsthand experience this summer. Most people would agree with the idea that death is not necessarily a delightful thing. However, in a laboratory filled with 120 new medical students on the ground floor of the College of Medicine, I saw a different side of this part of life.

Through the selfless nature of our “silent teachers”, those that donated their bodies to medicine, I learned the intricate anatomy of the human body. Endless hours were spent in the lab learning the paths of nerves and arteries, the actions of muscles, and the different features of the heart to name a few. As my Clinical Anatomy professor described it, it was during this time that we learned more about these individuals’ bodies than they would ever know. It is this exact knowledge that will serve as a foundation for my education and follow me throughout my career.

However, possibly more important was the lesson of generosity. Before meeting our “first patients”, as they are sometimes called, we were introduced to them through the family members of these considerable individuals. Listening to letters read that were written by daughters, sons, wives, and husbands, I learned that these people were no different than any one of us. They were housewives, businessmen, court reporters, teachers, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. They enjoyed music, gardening, and life and wanted to give back to others through this meaningful contribution. Hearing these words showed me that such a gift was not only from the individuals whose bodies I learned upon; it also came from their family members. Considering many family members expressed hesitation in following through with their loved one’s wishes, the appreciation I feel for their ability to honor such a request must also be expressed. Without the strength of these family members, this powerful learning experience would not be possible.

So how exactly is it that death delights the living through such a process? Through the honoring of these silent teachers at a special memorial ceremony hosted by my class, one teaching assistant described it fittingly: “When thinking about the location and path of the portal vein, you will not think back to a textbook or lecture. You will think back to the body you saw it on and studied so extensively. That sense of reasoning is what will stick with you throughout your life as a physician.” Nothing could be more true. Although only a medical student with plenty of years to go, I owe so much to these individuals for the gift of knowledge they gave to me. It is this knowledge that allows me to carry out the task that all physicians take on to improve the quality of life of patients. Just as I benefited from the education our silent teachers gave me, future patients will benefit from this unselfishness as well. For this reason, I will always remember my first patients—our silent teachers.
Oh, The Places You Will Go

Taalibah Ahmed, Class of 2009

When I graduated from Florida A&M University in May 2004, my sister, the first grade teacher, gave me a copy of Dr. Seuss’ Oh the Places You’ll Go to signify my new journey into medical school. I would later read the book for the first time to my third grade class not realizing the significance of my sister’s small gesture.

Oh the Places You’ll Go! And the places I have been. But I always believed somewhere in that book Sesame Street should have added “and the people you’ll meet.” With the stress of medical school, it is easy to get discouraged. But often it is the one patient out of the hundreds you see that lets you remember the reason you decided this path.

Oh the people I have met!

I stood outside exam room number seven and read the chart of my next patient, Mrs. P.

Oh she is 89 years old and she is here for a follow-up.

I focused my attention to the summary page where there is conveniently placed a brief past medical history. She is a patient with hypertension, hyperlipidemia and diabetes. What questions to ask? What exam do I need to perform? OK I’m ready.

I walked into the room and did my initial five second survey of my patient. I see my patient. She is an elderly Caucasian woman. Very small. She appears to be frail. Her hair of blue-gray curls is neatly groomed. She is wearing a long sleeve white shirt with plastic waist pants and what I think are Veters nursing shoes. I think to myself, Oh please let she design be a little more fashionable when I am old. Her eyes are bright and there is the hint of the faintest expression of a smile on her face. And there is someone with her. Perhaps her daughter or caregiver? I wonder? Oh well go on.

“Good morning Mrs. P. My name is Taalibah Ahmed. I am a third year student doctor at Florida State University working with your doctor this year. I am going to take a brief history and perform a quick exam and then the doctor will come in and join us.”

Oh Taalibah breathe and slow down.

“She is 89 years old and she is here for a follow-up.”

Mrs. P looks at me, smiles and says, “Hello.”

“Hi I smile and turn to her companion. I find out that she is my elderly daughter. She accompaniments her mom to all of her doctor visits.

“You are a girl,” Mrs. P. chimes in.

“Yes I am. Is that a problem? If you prefer to see the doctor, I completely understand.”

My patient explains. “No it’s fine. It’s just nice to have two doctors. When I was young, women were not doctors.”

I smile and attempt to redirect the encounter. “So you are here for follow-up of hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes?”

“Yes I have that. I take pills for those.”

“Aren’t you taking your medication as prescribed?”

She looks at me strangely and her daughter asks, “Are you the doctor?”

“No ma’am I am the student doctor. My name is Taalibah.”

“Oh you are studying to be a doctor. That is nice.”

When I see your young woman I have just met. The woman who was excited. It was later that she will discover that this frail elderly woman became strong in my eyes. Her eyes are the brightest I have ever seen. I look closely and notice as they have popped open I can now see the faintest sign of green. I now see her young self.

“Taalibah Ahmed, Class of 2009

I am proud of you.”
**Tired**

Author Unknown

If ever Accepted, I thought about what I might do: Sprint through the streets screaming at the top of my lungs I thought. It made me smile.

Then, it really Happened.

With bubbling excitement I transcended on to medical school

“Well, Hold onto that feeling, you’ll need to remember it someday” said a Second year.

And then, There it all was before me.

Death, dismemberment with honor. Vick’s vapor rub jammed up my nose to get through it all. Honestly the most difficult hours of my life... my cadaver had not been preserved appropriately.

Timeless months spent feverishly trying to absorb EVERY thing.

After all, it was a matter of life or death: Life or death for my patient. Or, for me?

For certain death of who I once was, I would be no longer.

Back home, I was the medical student.

I was different. How weird. Who was I now? Did I not...hah

OK. Three hours left till sleep, two hours left till sleep, negative two hours since I was supposed to be asleep, negative 3 hours... Aren’t you going to sleep? Get up 2 hours earlier, you can study then. Fine. Fruitless hours. What day is it? What month is it? Beats me...

You forgot to verbalize your inspection before auscultation.

You forgot the current data on first line treatment for HTN

You forgot how to unfold a drape correctly

You forgot the leading cause of hereditary anemia in Southeast Asia

You forgot to ask specifically about use of homeopathic remedies, acupuncture, or chiropractors

You forgot to wash your hands again after touching your hair

(Do you really have ANY talent?)

**USMLE Step 1: Eight hours of torture in a Bona Fide Prison;**

**Possible Water Boarding during breaks.**

**PASS: Onward and upward = ...whew; Wow...**

**Survival worked.**

**Take a breath.**

**Real live patients; Holy Gosh; kids too?**

I couldn’t really stop... the curriculum honestly didn’t allow for it.

What if I hurt someone or scarred them for the rest of their lives?

Could I bear that burden? Wait a second, was that likely?

I kept going... the alternative was Not an option.

The constant variable of Time... I continued to Age

I met Real people

Darkest secrets and every body system reviewed in less than one hour

This was my skill; that I was given Time.

I motivated, I encouraged, I laughed

I learned that I healed others simply because of my enthusiasm to help. How easy!!

...even while on my PDA to look up the generic of Lasix...again...

Yet, if I do not progress appropriately, Heavy weight of ever looming incompetence is Crushing

I want my patients to have a Great Doctor.

They deserve this, I demand this.

To me, this still requires a considerable gauntlet. Can my body take it?

Arching against muscle memory every single day

Uncertainty, hopefully

Damn it!

Something BIG within me has started to return, though.

Sometimes, I want to run through the streets screaming at the top of my lungs

As I think about what a beautiful career this will be.

If only I wasn’t so Tired...

---

**Risin’**

Amanda Pearcy, Class of 2012

A week ago Wednesday had a day I will always remember

Hadn’t realized I’d hear a word back from class in September

She was 13 and spoke with a Southern accent and a deep drawl

She was in for a checkup, not a break, bruise or a fall

Pretty as the dark sky as it shines with the moon at its peak

Not knowing me from Adam, she looked at me so meek

For telling your business to a stranger is tough

But she spoke with trepidation and began with a laugh

Hey Doc, I got a problem and it’s giving me fits

My legs got a risin’ and its hurting me to sit

A risin’? Oh my what the heck is that?

Am I in over my Doctor-to-Be Hat?

Oh no, on no, I want to help this girl so much.

To be the physician with the healing touch.

Am I trying too hard? Is this job not for me?

I asked her to show me scared for what I would see

I waited baited, throat with a lump

Relax she said...it’s just a bump.

**My North Star**

Michelle Miller, Class of 2012

To my North Star,

For all my years to come.

Whilst variations may be eminent,

Thou’ not predictable,

I will hold your charts closest to my heart.

During high seas and clear skies alike,

Whether in uncharted territory or well-traveled routes,

I will look to you,

For the guidance you have bestowed to me.

---

**Birthing a Parasite**

Camille Hippolyte, Class of 2010

I stood almost dead center of this woman’s vagina!

My left hand, like a robot guided the suture string as my attending repaired her tear

What an event!

I thought to myself I could never do it

There must be a place where women go to get this strength

I just haven’t found it yet

I guess you can tell that I have never expelled a human being from my own orifices

Ah, but will I ever?

I saw this woman three times before her birthing

‘They’ call it a “delivery”!

I call it war!

Her lacerations, proof of her battle and proof of her victory

As the miniature being finally emerged, I thought to myself—

“How beautiful!”

Then I saw the agony that masked her true aesthetics

And recalled the moments before this war...

I thought – You little parasite!

Leaching on this poor woman’s energy and blood

Inflating her corpus into a helpless waddling land whale

Inducing unlimited nausea, a slowly a bating fatigue,

With growth of an appetite larger than a giant’s,

And for icing on the cake, you trick her into spending money on you

And in gratitude, you kick her!

But in return she smiles?

But why?

Didn’t she realize that she might be losing?

I withdrew my blank stare from her repaired battle scar

And gazed at mother and son

They suddenly no longer seemed like opponents

A euphoric aura exuded from their togetherness

The thirty nine weeks of slow human torture

Literally ending in a vivacious burst of life.

The war was over.

All of a sudden it seemed worthwhile.

But still I wondered where she went to find that strength.

---

**How to Submit to HEAL**

Interested in adding your art, photography, writing, poem, or other artistic expression to this collaboration? Contact us!

EMAIL

Amanda Pearcy anp08@med.fsu.edu

Jordan Rogers jsr04@med.fsu.edu

Dr. Jose Rodriguez jose.rodriguez@med.fsu.edu

Please note, pieces selected for the HEAL newsletter may be reprinted in our annual book publication. Revision of artistic works to fill space allotment are at the discretion of the editorial staff.

Thank you and we look forward to your excellent submissions.