

Do Not Resuscitate: Pre-Medical Student's Dreams Suffocated by Disgruntled Physicians

From a very young age, parents instill in their children that they can become anything they want. From astronauts to police officers, children can dream and imagine themselves in an array of career choices. However, many parents dream of their children becoming successful doctors and lawyers. In this case, the dream of wearing a white coat and having an attached MD after my last name has always been *my* dream.

As a student working towards her prospective medical career, one of the ways of remaining on top of latest information and changes in the field of medicine has been through practicing physicians. Doctors in all specialties serve as a reminder of where I and so many other students can end up with hard-work, dedication, and most importantly, passion. Part of the process of preparing for entrance into medical school includes volunteering, interning, and taking part in an observership with physicians and surgeons in fields that one has an interest in. This vital opportunity opens the window and gives a huge breath of fresh air as it allows students to observe first-hand, the true dedication of physicians and the importance of ensuring that this is the career track that one wishes to follow. With 4 years of high school, 4 years of college, followed by 4 years of medical school, and 2 to 7 years of residency/fellowship, one cannot and should not pursue medicine if there is even a slight hesitation about the workload, hard-work and sacrifice needed to become an excellent physician. In college, there is always a joke amongst pre-medical students that if one can survive organic chemistry, then one can survive medical school. While this may or may not be true, it should be noted that the process to successfully gain admission to medical school relies on many factors and not just a grade that a student receives in a challenging course. Fortunately, many pre-medical students are aware of the complexities and rise up to the challenge. Furthermore, pre-med students additionally rely on the advice of a physician who serves as a mentor and helps the students alleviate the stress and anguish that, let's face it, anyone outside of the medical community simply cannot grasp. While many excellent physicians are fair and honest and provide an immeasurable amount of support to students wishing to become physicians, there are just as many physicians who are kicking and screaming for prospective medical students to turn around and run away from the dream of becoming doctor. They advise students to seek an alternate career track which in their words, will give them the ability to live freely and will save them from all the medical anguish.

When students are asked why they want to become a doctor, the first answer is almost always to help or heal people. While this is a very notable and honorable reason, many students, in my opinion, have not grasped the full understanding of what it takes to become a physician. It is much more than wearing a white coat, collecting a high salary (or how it used it

be) and signing MD or DO after one's name. The utilization of honest and current physicians can single-handedly show students the real world of medicine and let the *students* decide whether or not this is the path they wish to take. In my many years of meeting physicians and surgeons in a variety of specialties, I have noted a disturbing trend among the majority of those I once considered close mentors.

It is no secret that healthcare has taken a turn than many can agree has not been beneficial for practicing physicians and even patients. With private insurance companies and even government attempting to regulate how and when patients should be treated, many physicians are losing their ability of treating their patients how they would like and are forced to sit in the backseat as the privatization of healthcare is quickly divorcing the relationship between patients and physicians. For this reason, many physicians are losing their identity, their individuality, and just like patients they too are only becoming a number in the hospital and medical office setting. Based upon my observations and that of those of about thirty-one pre-medical students in Jacksonville, Florida, we collectively agree that the advice of many practicing physicians has been to choose an alternate career choice due to all the changes that is occurring in the healthcare industry. I can attest that on many occasions, physicians have slaughtered my dreams of becoming a physician because of their pity and hatred for what is currently happening. They complain, they moan, and some have gone as far as to say that if they knew what they know now, they never would have become a physician. When I asked some of these physicians whether or not they were happy, some replied that they hate to get out of bed in the morning. However, one physician who really went too far stated, "Melisa, trying to become a physician these days is sheer suicide. You will work like an animal for little pay and no appreciation. If I was younger, I would have left medicine immediately and I can confirm to you that should you pursue this path, you will regret it deeply. Besides, have you thought about becoming a pharmaceutical sales rep? That is where the money is!" I walked out of this doctor's office in tears thinking, "Am I making a mistake? I want to be happy. Is he right?" For the first time in so many years, I was starting to doubt myself- the absolute worst thing that one can do.

I was invited to meet with Dr. Gulani, the medical director for the Gulani Vision Institute in Jacksonville, FL who opened my eyes into what it means to become a compassionate, dedicated, and passionate eye surgeon. I explained the loads of negative advice that I was hearing throughout the medical community and from various physicians-some who were also ophthalmologists. Dr. Gulani stated that there is a major shift in the healthcare industry in the United States and that there are positive and negative changes that will impact all of us-not just those in the medical community. However, there is no true reason or basis for any physician not to rise above and continue, with passion, serving all those who need help. Dr. Gulani allowed me to see that many physicians are self-loathing in their own pity and that they have

no desire to become the best. Unfortunately, the only individuals who are disadvantaged by these physicians are their patients. As a pre-med student, there is the tendency to dream big and to even believe that one person can change the world. While some may say this is premature, Dr. Gulani shares, encourages, and builds both pre-med's and medical students to be the next generation of superb, intelligent, and motivated physicians. Despite all the changes occurring in our world, Dr. Gulani has shown that if you stay true to yourself, to your heart, and to your patients, you will succeed!