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# Graduate Personal Statement

I aspire to become a physician because of my desire to treat individuals with mental illnesses. I know how mental illness can disrupt the lives of patients as well as their loved ones, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

My brother suffers from schizophrenia. As an immigrant from China, and the only one in my family who speaks English, I took over responsibility for my brother's medical care and treatment. My challenges were not limited to caring for my brother, however. My uneducated parents need to be convinced of the benefits of modern medicine. Meanwhile, I had to overcome language difficulties and work part-time to support myself throughout college. My grades reflect the enormity of these challenges, yet these experiences have made me more determined to pursue a medical degree to help other families like mine.

To further explore the field of mental problems, I started working with Dr. XXX, a clinical psychologist at Rutgers University. As a research intern, I assisted the professor in rewriting an NIH grant application under extreme time limitations and successfully got funding. I also had the opportunity to interview and evaluate participants from Self-Help Centers across New Jersey, and learned that social factors (e.g. childhood abuse) can play an important role in the development of mental illness. Many patients have no known history of traumatic experiences, however, and therefore seem to have a disease that arises from a more basic level. My eagerness to learn and understand the mechanisms of diseases led me to pursue a research position in the biomedical field.

To that end, I joined Dr. XXX laboratory at the University of Michigan to study childhood lung diseases. I was able to quickly pick up valuable laboratory techniques and principles of medical research. Currently, I am working closely with stellar clinicians, scientists, and engineers on lung disease projects. Since my arrival at the lab, we have collected meaningful data for understanding basic mechanisms of lung diseases and discovering innovations in treating patients. One such example is a study of the role of periostin in asthma development. We discovered that periostin is required for maximal allergen-induced airway responses in mice and may become a promising therapeutic target in asthmatic patients. I was also honored to be invited to present at the 25th Annual Michigan Pediatric Research Symposium, and received great responses.

With the goal of serving the most underserved, I applied my research experiences to help the local National Alliance on Mental Illness division. The rich volunteer and research experiences will provide a solid foundation for my study in the GSBS master's program at Rutgers. In addition, I took pre-medical classes at a local university and improved my MCAT score from 23 to 30 while working full time. I still need to further develop my knowledge and abilities academically before applying to medical school, however. Moreover, the chance to volunteer in community clinics and take medical classes alongside medical students makes the program unique. With a national reputation and one of the most collaborative and supportive environments for students, Rutgers is a perfect place to begin my pursuit of a medical career.

As Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." I have tasted success and have survived difficult challenges. With my experiences and accomplishments and the master's program's guidance, I can render a notable performance in graduate study at Rutgers.

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