

The pathology community is my family. Lab medicine was there for me at the lowest point in my life. If it weren't for the opportunities from the lab community, I wouldn't have had a successful career before medical school, I wouldn't have met my wife, and I wouldn't have found my path to pathology. I am certain I want to become a pathologist based on my experiences.

As a college athlete and biology major, college was a busy time for me, and I didn't feel ready to pursue medical school immediately. I applied for several jobs, ultimately taking a position at a hospital as a lab assistant. I volunteered in hospitals as a tech during college, but nothing could prepare me for what I saw in the lab. I was immediately blown away by the complex instrumentation in the clinical lab. I felt like I was in an episode of "Modern Marvels" the tv show! From the long central line connecting multiple chemistry analyzers to the manual methods of pipetting in blood bank, I felt like I was in a perfect sci-fi world. I wanted to learn as much as I could. During my time as a lab assistant, my manager asked if I was interested in becoming a medical technologist. I immediately jumped at the opportunity to continue learning about clinical lab sciences.

I completed my training as a medical technologist while working full-time as a lab assistant. This meant many long days, but it was incredible and worth the hard work. I enjoyed working as a lab tech, particularly in hematology and blood bank. The chance to assist in recognizing diseases such as leukemia or providing life-changing blood products was intensely rewarding for me. I also made lifelong friends while in the lab. One of my friends, a groomsman at my wedding, inspired me to become a traveling medical technologist. While working as a traveling medical technologist, I was exposed to new instrumentation and new labs. The most important thing about my time as a traveling MT is that I was inspired to apply to medical school.

While working blood bank at a level 1 trauma center, I interacted with Pathology residents. In the past, I would prepare bone marrow smears or submit transfusion reaction reports to my pathologists. This was the first time I got to see pathology training up close, and I even saw an osteopathic pathology resident. I didn't even know that was possible as a D.O. By interacting with the residents, I was inspired to finally apply to medical school.

While in medical school, I learned more about anatomy, histology, and pathology. I slowly noticed something. I loved learning about these subjects. Later, I would even become the pathology club president. As president, I used every opportunity to educate my peers about the pathology specialty. My medical school is still relatively new, so we didn't have an official pathology rotation in place yet. However, I was determined to make it happen. During medical school, I worked in blood bank and became close to my local pathologist. I asked her to be my preceptor for a rotation, and I am honored to say I was her first medical student and helped set up the first official local pathology rotation with my medical school.

Understandably, I was overwhelmed doing my first pathology rotation, especially since it was the second rotation of my third year. Though the plethora of biopsies and large grossing specimens were new to me, I loved every minute of it. I felt like an investigator hunting for lymph

nodes in colectomy specimens or providing a diagnosis to those suffering from unknown cancers. During this rotation, I realized this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

My journey has not been straightforward. I am blessed to have lab medicine in my life. The accumulation of these experiences has led me to fall more in love with pathology. From my beginnings as a lab assistant to now completing pathology rotations, it is a dream come true to be applying to a pathology residency program. Pathology is not just a career for me, it's who I am. It's my family. *By Chris Bell, DO (Twitter: [@PathDad](#))*