

The practice of pathology requires tireless preparation, precise execution, and patience. My passion for pathology, combined with the pathologist's mindset I developed from important life experiences, will allow me to contribute meaningfully to your program as a pathology resident.

Playing tennis since age 5 taught me to prepare tirelessly for the mental and physical components of every match. This comfort with practice and repetition served me well during my post-junior fellowship in pathology at UCLA, where I applied the same approach to grossing. I grossed 260 surgical specimens that year, the majority of which were moderately complex, and completed 42 hospital autopsies. Patient care could have been compromised without reviewing each case's clinical history and recommended guidelines. For example, the first time I received a radical orchiectomy specimen, my initial bisection revealed several nodules on the cut surface. Having prepared for this type of specimen, I knew to examine the relationships of the nodules to critical areas such as the rete testis, epididymis, and spermatic cord. I was then able to provide a complete pathology report with an accurate pathologic stage classification.

In my teenage years, the syncopation and low tones of the bass guitar drew me to the instrument. As part of a band, the specific notes I played established the song's musical foundation, amplified the other instruments, and gave feeling to the music. Similarly, a pathologist's role is to set the diagnostic foundation and perform with precision so other specialists can perform their best. Without the precise execution of the pathology department, medicine wouldn't yield the same diagnostic, therapeutic, or prognostic accuracy. For example, while on gynecologic pathology service at UCLA, I grossed a placenta from a preterm birth that revealed microabscesses and a diagnosis consistent with *Candida funisitis*. The obstetrics and gynecology clinicians were immediately notified and encouraged to start antifungal therapy. As this was an unexpected finding, the clinical team was grateful for our diagnosis.

But of all my life experiences, becoming a father at the age of 26 has prepared me the most for a career in pathology. As a new father, I became concerned with my daughter's motor skills as she struggled to crawl or walk according to the standard timeline. However, one day, out of the blue, she stood up like a scene from "Bambi" and attempted to run. This tender, fascinating, and transient moment reminded me of the value of patience, a virtue I have gained through the joys of parenthood. As a post-junior fellow, long surgeries that delayed grossing hours and pending histology slides taught me to embrace patience and the downtime it provides. Instead of waiting idly, I used this time to study and engage in multiple research projects that helped me grow as a professional.

As I enter the next chapter of my life, I desire to train at a pathology residency that exposes me to a high volume of diverse cases and prepares me for a career in academics, community, or private practice. My joy in discovering pathology makes me want to promote pathology to others. I have started to connect with the future pathology pipeline using innovative teaching methods such as social media with the username @pathpapi. I plan to provide awareness about opportunities in pathology to underexposed students of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). I look forward to sharing my enthusiasm with you and the department. *By David Afework, MD (Twitter: [@pathpapi](https://twitter.com/pathpapi))*