

While rumor has it that some of my peers may have been sneaking out during our teenage years, you could instead find me on the couch into the wee hours of the night, binge-watching “Mystery Diagnosis” and “Monsters Inside Me.” Looking back, I can recognize that perhaps this peculiar interest of a 14-year-old may have been a foreshadowing of a 26-year-old pursuing medicine’s hidden gem of a specialty, the study of disease.

During the first two years of medical school, I entertained the idea of nearly any specialty, while eventually discovering that the parts of each specialty that interested me was learning about the pathology of the corresponding organ system. Particularly, I looked forward to one lecturer, who happened to be a pathologist. Perhaps this was a coincidence due to their captivating autopsy stories, until I also found myself thoroughly enjoying watching Pathoma videos over and over to prepare for my Step 1 exam. I was intrigued by the particular patterns and characteristics of each disease process, the physiology behind them, and how they manifest clinically and histologically. I wanted to investigate this hunch and decided that I would choose pathology as my only elective of third year.

In the meantime, I was able to select hematology/oncology as my internal medicine selective, as I thought this might be the most related to my specialty interest in question and would offer me a unique perspective. Among the patients I encountered was a man that had found out only a few weeks prior he had adenocarcinoma of lung primary with metastases to the liver and brain. The hematologist/oncologist made a call to the pathologist to see if there were any targetable driver alterations. Unfortunately, there were none, and the patient passed only a few days after I palpated his nodular liver. This case was memorable to me, as it demonstrated the potential hope that a pathologist can provide when they dive deep into a patient’s disease state and how a pathologist’s findings heavily influence treatment options and prognosis. The profound impact on patient care became further evident to me upon completion of my first pathology elective. I knew within a few days that I found my niche, and at the end of the first week, I applied and was selected to be a board member of the international virtual student interest group, Path-SIG, which aims to help medical students like myself take on the journey to become a pathologist.

In pursuit of my specialty of choice, it was also important for me to find something that will utilize my best qualities and match my personality and career goals. For instance, I believe that pathology will satisfy the inner Scrabble enthusiast in me, which in the most fun way, correlates with my ability to joyfully ponder a challenge at length without becoming frustrated. Similarly, I perceive that pathology will best suit my problem-solving and pattern recognition abilities, qualities that I feel have greatly aided me in my academics. With interests in hematopathology, dermatopathology, and gastrointestinal pathology, I am ecstatic that pathology will allow me to pursue fellowships to further subspecialize. Lastly, I look forward to the teaching and mentoring opportunities that a pathology career will bring. My experiences as a tutor, mentor, and various leadership roles have allowed me to appreciate the joy that comes with helping others succeed, and I wish to have the opportunity to continue this at a teaching hospital in the future.

Though I cannot claim that I have always wanted to be a pathologist since the start of medical school, I am grateful that I gave pathology a second thought. Now with a few pathology rotations under my belt, I feel so fortunate to be applying for residency in this amazing specialty. I am

hoping to find a residency program that pushes me to be my best by providing ample opportunity for growth while simultaneously making me feel supported and encouraged as I prepare for fellowship and beyond. As I look to the future, I am ecstatic to begin the training for a career that tremendously impacts patients, is depended on by other health care professionals, and intellectually challenges me to figure out those real-life medical mysteries and monsters inside us. *By Tiarra Price, DO (Twitter: [@TiarraPrice](#))*