

College Application Essay Example 500 Words

As soon as the patient room door opened, the worst stench I have ever encountered hit me square in the face. Though I had never smelled it before, I knew instinctively what it was: rotting flesh. A small, elderly woman sat in a wheelchair, dressed in a hospital gown and draped in blankets from the neck down with only her gauze-wrapped right leg peering out from under the green material. Dr. Q began unwrapping the leg, and there was no way to be prepared for what I saw next: gangrene-rotted tissue and blackened, dead toes.

Never before had I seen anything this gruesome—as even open surgery paled in comparison. These past two years of shadowing doctors in the operating room have been important for me in solidifying my commitment to pursue medicine, but this situation proved that time in the operating room alone did not quite provide a complete, accurate perspective of a surgeon’s occupation. Doctors in the operating room are calm, cool, and collected, making textbook incisions with machine-like, detached precision. It is a profession founded solely on skill and technique—or so I thought. This grisly experience exposed an entirely different side of this profession I hope to pursue.

Feeling the tug of nausea in my stomach, I forced my gaze from the terrifying wound onto the hopeful face of the ailing woman, seeking to objectively analyze the situation as Dr. Q was struggling to do himself. Slowly and with obvious difficulty, Dr. Q explained that an infection this severe calls for an AKA: Above the Knee Amputation. In the slow, grave silence that ensued, I reflected on how this desperate patient’s very life rests in the hands of a man who has dedicated his entire life to making such difficult decisions as these. I marveled at the compassion in Dr. Q’s promise that this aggressive approach would save the woman’s life. The patient wiped his watery eyes and smiled a long, sad smile. “I trust you, Doc. I trust you.” She shook Dr. Q’s hand, and the doctor and I left the room.

Back in his office, Dr. Q addressed my obvious state of contemplation: “This is the hardest part about what we do as surgeons,” he said, sincerely. “We hurt to heal, and often times people cannot understand that. However, knowing that I’m saving lives every time I operate makes the stress completely worth it.”

Suddenly, everything fell into place for me. This completely different perspective broadened my understanding of the surgical field and changed my initial perception of who and what a surgeon was. I not only want to help those who are ill and injured, but also to be entrusted with difficult decisions the occupation entails. Discovering that surgery is also a moral vocation beyond the generic application of a trained skill set encouraged me. I now understand surgeons to be much more complex practitioners of medicine, and I am certain that this is the field for me.