

Healthcare
professional



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As far back as I can recall, there was never a time when I dreamt of being anything other than a healthcare professional. While other children my age dreamt of being firemen, policeman or, quite simply and unrealistically, superheroes, I want to be a healer. From my childish perspective, healers were the ultimate superheroes; they healed the sick, made those who felt bad feel good and, quite fascinatingly, concocted curative magical potions - medicines. There is no doubt that my tendencies were influenced, possibly even deliberately shaped, by my parents, one a family doctor and the other a pharmacist. While I always knew that I wanted to be a healthcare professional, it was not until my college years that I realized that pharmaceutical studies were where my true passion and interest lay. Several factors influenced this decision.

The primary reason why I chose pharmaceutical studies was my academic inclinations. During my high school years I sat for courses relevant to both medical and pharmaceutical studies. Although I found biology and life sciences very interesting, they failed to excite and interest me as much as did chemistry. It was, thus, that I became a chemistry, pre-pharmacy major at college.

At college, and largely due to the fact that I had settled upon the study of the subject which interested me more than any other, I did very well. I graduated with a 3.7 GPA and achieved a perfect 4.0 GPA three times. I was named on the Dean's List every semester throughout my studies and on the President's Honor Student List three times. I excelled at my academic studies. The reason is not so much that I devoted myself to my studies but that I truly enjoyed that which I was studying.

While I have no doubt that my passion for Chemistry played a seminal role in

influencing my decision to become a pharmacist, my determination to improve the healthcare situation in my native country, Vietnam, played an equally important role. As a child, I frequently visited the hospital where my father worked and, as a youth, actively volunteered in many of its programs. While I was deeply affected by the fact that doctors were often unable to relieve their patients' suffering because the economic situation in Vietnam meant that hospitals were ill-equipped, nothing affected me more than watching the old and the young needlessly suffer because they could not afford to buy the required medicine. From my perspective, the answer lay in the development of affordable, local and generic drugs which even the poor would be able to afford. Determined to become part of this solution, I knew that I had to become a pharmacist.

In retrospective reflection, I believe that one of the most powerful influences in my decision to become a pharmacist was my involvement with an international NGO called Care the People. In 2005 I traveled with the organization to Vietnam and worked with them for seven months. In 2006, I repeated the experience and worked with them throughout my summer holidays. Care the People, a healthcare NGO, gave me an amazing perspective into the work which both pharmacists and doctors do across the globe; how they travel to remote locations in order to make the lives, the healthcare situation, of a few people, just a bit better. As I liaised between doctors, pharmacists and the local people, I realized that I truly was happy and fulfilled. I also realized how important the development of affordable, generic drugs was to lesser developed and developing economies. This experience left absolutely no doubt in my mind that I wanted to become a pharmacist and that I would find the work extremely fulfilling.

Pharmacy combines between my life passions: chemistry, volunteer work and healthcare. I have worked with the sick in nursing homes and have worked with international organizations in Vietnam as an interpreter and assistant to doctors and pharmacists. I have, albeit from the outside, experienced both professions and know that, of the two, that of the pharmacist is where my true passion lays.