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Fall 2016

I have had the great fortune to never have been personally disadvantaged either physically or socio-economically. Born into an immigrant family, I did have the opportunity to travel frequently across the globe and observe diverse cultures. I saw the stark difference in quality of life between the poor in India and the rich in the United States. By shadowing a doctor in India, I also experienced public health issues first-hand. The doctor served as a neonatologist in a hospital in Pune, where he practiced on ill newborns in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Many problems presenting in these babies trace back to the health of the mothers, so he spent a large portion of his time speaking with families to determine the dietary habits, physical activity and drug use of mothers. Often these mothers dealt with poor nutrition or lack of physical activity prior to birth, which directly led to these sick infants in the NICU. The sobering lack of knowledge in maternal health among these mothers convinced me to work in the field of public health.

My newfound appreciation for public health reshaped my previous research interest in genetics. Instead of strictly thinking within a biological paradigm, I now want to use genetics as a tool for improving patient care. Initially, this meant finding genes that predicted disease status. Later, I discovered more nuanced uses of genetic information, especially in clinical trial design. Applying the growing wealth of genetic data to clinical trials excites me because it supplies a direct impact to my research. While genetics research continues to fascinate me, it often takes many years before results actually reach patients. Clinical trials, however, provide clear effects much sooner; for someone initially interested in medicine, these earlier benefits of research are very motivating.

This experience also gives me a valuable perspective in biostatistics research. Often, while delving deep into the statistics, one loses sight of the goal, improving human health, but I will never forget the first time I looked upon a room of infants, the size of my hands, all attached to respirators. Combining this vision with my background in natural science, I can always bring an important, grounded perspective to any project, whether that be an understanding of the genetics in a project or the effects on patients of a particular clinical trial design. At UW, I can further enrich my perspective by developing a strong, theoretical understanding of biostatistics. This will allow me to excel in academia, as I will have the statistical background to provide important analyses, while also keeping a keen eye toward the significance of my results.