

From Cowboy-Astronaut-Rockstar to Family Medicine

When my childhood dreams of becoming a cowboy-astronaut-rockstar proved impractical, I set my sights on a new ambition: becoming a physician. The transition from strumming a guitar in outer space to practicing medicine might seem drastic, but in reality, my true aspiration has always been to live a life of purpose and adventure. My journey to medicine began with the loss of my older cousin, who was like a brother to me, to brain cancer. His passing left an indelible mark on my family and me, and I vowed to become a pediatric neurosurgeon. Years of dedication, study, and perseverance led me to medical school, where I eagerly pursued this goal. Only to realize, however, that neurosurgery did not align with my passions.

Determined to find my true calling, I explored oncology, only to miss performing procedures. General surgery drew me in, yet I longed for deeper, more continuous patient relationships. Then, during my core rotations, I had the opportunity to practice family medicine in a rural setting, and everything clicked. I fell in love with the breadth of the practice, the variety of procedures, and, most importantly, the opportunity to build lasting relationships with patients over time.

Growing up as the child of Ukrainian immigrants, I often heard stories of how things were done "back home." My relatives hailed from Kam'yanets'-Podil's'kyi, a town where neighbors cared for one another and children were raised by the community. There, general practitioners were revered for their vast knowledge and ability to provide holistic care. The best physicians were not those who claimed to know everything, but rather those who blended modern medicine with traditional wisdom and had the humility to recognize their limitations. These stories shaped my understanding of what a doctor should be: not just a practitioner, but also a leader, mentor, and trusted confidant.

Though medicine has evolved tremendously, I still believe in the idea of the "Town Doctor", the physician who truly knows their patients, serves as a pillar of the community, and provides comprehensive care. This is the role I hope to embody. My goal is to practice family medicine in a rural setting, with a special emphasis on obstetrics. I envision myself caring for entire families and, by extension, the broader community. I aspire to own a private practice, where I can see patients in the clinic for regular visits and procedures, while also maintaining hospital privileges to assist with labor and delivery.

To achieve this, my first step is completing residency. I hope to train in an urban setting with strong ties to underserved rural areas, as this would provide the perfect bridge from my suburban upbringing to practicing in a smaller town. After residency, I plan to establish my career in a rural area, preferably in West Texas or Colorado, where the need for dedicated physicians is significant.

Beyond my medical aspirations, I also value balance in life. I aim to be an engaged member of my community, a devoted husband, and a loving father. Additionally, I have a passion for writing and education. One of my long-term goals is to publish work on medical etymology, bringing attention to the origins of medical terminology in a way that is both engaging and educational. I believe that understanding the roots of our language enhances communication and deepens the

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appreciation for our craft. Furthermore, I have always been inspired by the resilience and heroism I witness in medicine. The stories of patients and physicians alike have shaped my own creative writing, including poetry and short fiction. One day, I hope to share these stories with a wider audience, illuminating the human side of medicine.

Teaching is another aspiration of mine. I find immense joy in witnessing the spark of understanding in learners' eyes, and I hope that as I gain experience and wisdom, I will have the privilege of mentoring future generations of physicians in an academic setting. Further, I would be interested in serving as the liaison between urban and rural settings, given my life experience in both. Many major medical institutions are expanding into such areas, and I see myself pioneering such an endeavor.

My career path has certainly diverged from my childhood dream of interstellar rock-and-roll, but in many ways, the essence remains the same. I have always sought adventure, meaning, and the chance to make a difference. Now, instead of navigating the cosmos, I navigate the intricate lives of my patients. To provide a healing touch, to welcome a new life into the world, to offer comfort in a patient's final moments. This is my mission.

Though I have charted a path for my future, I remain open to the unknown possibilities that lie ahead. Medicine is ever-changing, and so am I. But no matter where this journey takes me, I know that at its heart, my purpose remains the same: to serve, to heal, and to be a steadfast presence in the lives of those who entrust me with their care.