

PERSONAL STATEMENT

My father has always emphasized the importance of a sturdy foundation. Although on many of these occasions he was referring to the concrete base of his latest construction project, I appreciated the broader and more significant implications of his message. As Indian immigrants, my parents raised me in an environment that promoted strong and vibrant cultural values, which focused on dependability, personal integrity, and kindness towards others. Even more, my upbringing encouraged a sense of community and responsibility to help others. I therefore found activities such as serving my congregation and volunteering at the local hospital to be natural aspects of my youth. These invaluable experiences profoundly impacted my development, guided many of my decisions, and ultimately inspired my pursuit of a physician scientist career.

To balance the demands of an ambitious career path, I often engaged in *sports*. I developed a passion for tennis and even more so basketball. I kept up with sports after graduation, participating in intramural and city-wide leagues throughout medical/graduate school as well as residency and fellowship. I maintain weekly match-ups with friends to this day. Playing sports has not only helped keep me active, but also facilitated much needed mental escapes from the persistent grind of medical research. My current goal is to maintain an injury-free status while overcoming the age-related decline in my athletic ability with a more intelligent gaming strategy. I also transformed my routine of bike commuting into a flirtation with endurance sports, completing a half-marathon and Olympic-distance triathlon. I have now found respect for endurance athletes, who are clearly cut from a different cloth than myself. In addition to conventional sports, I have gravitated towards social games, particularly billiards, table tennis, and bowling. Many of my friendships developed and continue to flourish in these contexts. Most recently, I have transcended the role of a casual chess player to that of a chess enthusiast. Perhaps there is a parallel between my interest in solving chess problems to that of my desire to crack the cancer code.

Exploration is not only a key feature of my scientific career, but also a guiding principle of my personal life. To my parent's dismay, my childhood expeditions were often riddled with disaster, constantly leading to catastrophic outcomes. They never let me forget the day I almost burnt down the house. It was a blessing when the curiosity that motivated these misadventures was channeled in constructive directions. These days I celebrate my enthusiasm for exploration by venturing into the wilderness, where I can disconnect from technology and reconnect with either myself or friends. It is therefore no surprise that the second of two cross-country road trips (San Francisco → Boston) consisted of five national parks. I seek out road trip opportunities as it affords a unique experience that features changing landscapes and unpublicized in-between towns. Most recently, my wife and I carved out southern Spain and Portugal by automobile, soaking in the beautiful views and savoring the delicious food. To complement these outdoor adventures, I often take pleasure in finding a local brewery. In addition to supporting local establishments, I am attracted to the communal and friendly atmosphere inherent to breweries. In fact, perhaps my most popular publication may be one featured in my residency newsletter describing my exploration of northern California breweries (<https://issuu.com/ucsf-gme/docs/spring2014>, page 12-13).

My father's advice still holds true today. I want to establish a career in academic medicine that is supported by a strong research foundation. My passion for investigative research is fundamentally dependent on its power to impact our understanding of human disease and ultimately improve patient care. I am inspired by the unyielding resolve demonstrated by patients with cancer. Witnessing only a fraction of their battle against cancer has provided me with a lifetime of motivation. I am determined to improve the outcomes of these patients. By fulfilling my career promise as an oncologist and cancer investigator, I hope that I will come one step closer to this goal.