

Over the next ten years, medicine will be experiencing a period of rapid evolution. With the recently sequenced human genome, the push towards stem cell research, and the distinct possibility of human cloning, medical science will certainly be on the brink of many great advances that will change the way we think about disease and treatment. In order for society to fully access the benefits of these advancements, the medical field will first have to contend with the heady task of drawing up ethical guidelines for these emergent therapies. I envision myself involved in this collaborative discussion that will hopefully result in measures that do justice to parties on all sides of the issues.

Teaching, research, and patient care—the three key components I foresee as part of my medical practice—will help to qualify me for such a position. Although my formal education will reach its end within the next ten years, my personal commitment to learning is a life-long one. I envision taking part in both sides of the learning process by playing the roles of both teacher and student. Whether my students are determined MS-1's, wide-eyed undergraduates, or my own children, teaching would give me the opportunity to pass on the knowledge and passion that I have inherited from my own inspiring teachers and professors. Moreover, through teaching, I would remain connected with the thoughts and attitudes of rising generations, thereby allowing me to bring fresh, new ideas to the ethical discourse.

The role of student I will play as a dedicated medical research scientist. Certainly, those engaged in scientific research can be thought of as students—only, in this scenario, their teachers are fellow research peers and experimental results. This is the guiding principle behind the highly effective methodology of academia, a setting that I hope to be linked to ten years down the road and beyond. Being part of such an environment helps one to steer clear of dogmatic thinking with constant exposure to a multitude of viewpoints and justifications.

Since the objective of medical research is, after all, the application of new findings to the treatment and prevention of human disease, I envision that clinical research and patient care will also be key elements of my future medical practice. This will allow me to stay in touch with the humanistic aims of my work and provide me with a concrete link to society at large. In the wake of these upcoming medical breakthroughs, I imagine that there will be a rising need to educate the general public to help dispel misinformation and trepidation that is likely to develop. This too something I would like to participate in.

Because I am willing to commit to the rigors of an MD/PhD program, I understand that the precise length of training time is difficult to pin down at the outset. Nevertheless, in ten years time, I hope to have finished my graduate training and be well on my way to completing a residency program.

I would like to end my comments with the following thought: because the future is inherently filled with uncertainty when envisioned from the present, I enjoy working with the analogy that pictures life as an intricate chess game. Each decision we make is a move on the limitless chessboard of possibilities. In such an infinite game, the goal is not to win and thereby end the game; rather, it is to play and continue to play well.