

Summer Institute for Medical Students Application
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My interest in addictions and recovery began early in my second year of medical school when we were given an interesting community-oriented assignment as part of our Introduction to Clinical Medicine course: to attend an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and interview a self-identified alcoholic afterwards. That one three hour assignment opened my eyes to the intensity of the disease of addiction and the powerful struggles of those walking the difficult road of recovery. As I sat in the AA meeting listening as empathetically as I could to personal testimonials, I was struck by how much suffering each patient had endured through experiences such as loss of livelihood, erosion of relationships with family and friends, and sometimes incarceration. What was so powerful about their stories was that many were expressing self-awareness and a type of honesty about their lives and their addictions that is rarely seen in interpersonal communication. I could see that the other members of the group provided steady community support. Indeed, when I spoke with Mr. X afterwards and listened to his story about homelessness and long-standing alcoholism, he attributed his nearly 1 year of sobriety to the strength that he drew from the others at the AA meetings. From community support, these patients generate the power to regain self-control in their lives.

In the treatment of the disease of addiction through a twelve-step program, I learned about the power of community support and the therapeutic potential of honest and open communication. Recently, I have attended two Marijuana Anonymous meetings (Narcotics Anonymous meetings specifically for marijuana dependency) where I observed and quietly listened to learn more about the circumstances surrounding these patients' dependencies. I witnessed there many of the same features of openness and self-awareness that I saw at the AA meeting. These are some of the features of this particular brand of medicine that motivate me to apply to attend the Betty Ford Clinic Summer Institute for Medical Students. I am curious to discover what the stories are of those who are struggling with the most difficult of addictions—how they developed their addictions and what led them to seek treatment. I would like to learn how health care professionals treat patients who suffer from addictions to exogenous chemicals or collections of chemicals. Finally, I would like to see how medical therapy is blended with community-based therapy.

In medical school, we are taught that addiction is a disease. My service as a volunteer board member of the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility and now chapter president has helped me to understand that treating all human beings with dignity means that it is a socially responsible imperative to treat and care for those who suffer from diseases that are in the shadows of society. Addiction is an underappreciated and under-recognized disease in our society. I would be thrilled to have the opportunity to spend a week at the Betty Ford Center and to learn and see how this disease is humanely dealt with. In the future, I have hopes of possibly specializing in addiction medicine. Other possible paths I am considering are emergency medicine, family medicine, or pain medicine. In any of these paths, addiction is a disease that will definitely appear.

Thank you for considering my application.