



Shadowing Under a Family Physician



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Why Shadow?

I shadowed under Dr. DiGirolamo, a family physician, who I will be referring to as Dr. D, the nickname given to him from his staff and patients. at Mercy Medical in Lutherville. This was a chance for me to apply concepts I was learning to real-life scenarios, learn more about the field I want to go into, and gain a better understanding of the medical field as a whole. So, by scribing I was giving myself a chance to become familiar with medical terminology and practices, while also being able to directly observe how a family physician interacts with and examines his patients. The most important aspect of this all, however, was being able to learn the thought process behind patient interaction through asking questions after seeing patients.

My Daily Experience

My days in the office composed of three main parts: when we were in rooms with patients, preparing to see the next patient, and the short bit of downtime needed to get paper work done. Before seeing a patient, Dr. D would pull up their chart and show me how both how to interpret it and what information should be searched out. After a short briefing of the patients chart, we would enter the room and see the patient. Although I was not allowed any direct patient contact, I made sure to be actively observing through coming up with my own diagnosis. Even if it was wrong, by paying attention to Dr. D's questions I would be able to learn what to look for and how to evaluate it. The patients we saw had problems ranging from physical injuries, illness, mental illness, along with routine physicals. In between patients I would have plenty of time to ask questions.



Applying Prior Knowledge

The importance of being able to ask questions comes into how I can utilize my past knowledge to gain a better understanding of the medicine I'm learning. This goes for both my physics and biology classes. For example, with a patient that has familial hypercholesterolemia, I understand the basics behind transcription pathways to know how a certain pill can affect it. From there, what I've learned from physics can be used as an intuition for what effects will occur. By being able to apply what I already know, I begin to get a better understanding of the practices I'm trying to learn.

What I Learned:

As mentioned previously, part of being a family physician is knowing how to deal with a wide array of issues. However, with seeing the small repetition of problems between patients you get to learn more about how to properly "investigate" a patient to diagnose them. For example, we saw multiple patients with some form of muscle tear. One thing in common with every patient, however was the flowchart of questions Dr. D asked them, leading to a physical examination to pinpoint the problem based on the location of their pain in relation to their nerves and muscles. This same concept of gather information on the patient through questions, to a physical exam to further confirm a diagnosis seems to be a doctors greatest tool.

Reflection

At the end of all this, one of the most important things I learned was just how much more I need to learn, but that only made me more excited to pursue family medicine as a career. Getting to understand the process that goes into evaluating a patient has helped me learn more about much I would enjoy a job that both allows me to have meaningful interaction with others, problem solving, and the ability to positively help others. The time I spent at Lutherville has only strengthened my resolve towards staying on the premedical path, and I hope that I find myself in such an enjoyable learning and working environment. This environment, of course, includes the patients that were kind enough to help me learn by allowing me to join Dr. DiGirolamo during their visits.