

Writing Assignment #1: Personal Statement

Although I have health problems, I have always tried my best to not allow them to dictate what I can or cannot do. However, with that being said, it is because of those health problems that my academic path has been unique. It is thanks to my nonconventional path that led me to discover the career of which I am pursuing, genetic counseling.

In the winter of 2017, as a junior in high school, I received an overnight sleep study as well as a daytime nap study. It was in January of 2018 when I officially received the diagnosis of having Narcolepsy. The weeks and months following being diagnosed consisted of new medications and trying to wrap my head around my new normal. Always being a very positive and optimistic person, I knew that this was a challenge that I was strong enough to endure, even if I did not feel like it most days.

Having completed all the required classes to graduate a year early from high school, I did so in the summer following my junior year with honors. This decision then allowed me to enroll in classes at community college, getting times which worked well with my Narcolepsy and medication schedule. Around this same time, I went to see a geneticist at CHKD for other potential health problems. It was then that I first met and worked with a genetic counselor; from there on out my interest for that career grew. After two years and many courses under my belt, I transferred to ODU with the goal of finishing my undergraduate degree and then pursuing my masters in genetic counseling.

I would succeed as a genetic counselor not only because of my never-ending passion and growing interest for genetics and all things related to it, but also because of the health challenges I have endured. My health problems have made me a kinder and more understanding person. They have taught me to find the silver lining in every single situation no matter how negative it is. I believe all those characteristics to be incredible strengths for one to possess when working with patients as a genetic counselor. Often for patients as well as their families, looking into possible risk factors for specific health conditions can be incredibly stressful. The worry can then continue to carry over when certain tests must be run. As a genetic counselor, I would use my own experience of health conditions to create a bond with my patient so that they feel understood. I would also be sure to use my optimistic and positive outlook on things to help lessen the worries my patient feels.

After being diagnosed with Narcolepsy, I was dead set on not letting it change things for me when it pertained to my goals. However, looking back now, I am so grateful that it has shaped my academic path to what it is today. It is because of my health problems that I am pursuing my masters in genetic counseling and have a better understanding for the future patients I will work with. I am proud for where I am at today, as it has been anything but easy; but for this reason, once I achieve my career goal it will mean so much more.