

The winter had been frigid, many days with zero to subzero temperatures with windchill. He had found his mother laying in a frozen puddle early in the morning. Immediately, he carried her inside and began warming her with blankets. He knew it would be hours before an ambulance could get to them, and so he made the long drive to the nearest hospital in Rapid City. I listened intently to him, talking about the hospital stay and how his mother was doing after being discharged home. This was my first rural family medicine rotation, and it was in this exam room with this son and mother that I realized where I wanted to practice medicine.

I grew up in a small, rural community in South Dakota, population approximately 800. The majority of my family were ranchers, and this son and his mother reminded me of home. I was reminded of the kindness of small, rural communities. The grit and the love of the people who are members of those communities. It comes with a different mentality, one that does not have the time or patience for the trivial. This extends to the approach to healthcare, seeking care only if it is very serious. In that exam room, I completely understood when the son explained how they did not venture in much for healthcare appointments. I was never brought into the clinic much growing up either. "No blood, no tears."

The rural family medicine rotations, regardless of where I completed them, have felt like home. I know I will practice as a full spectrum family medicine physician in a small, rural, and underserved community. I hope to incorporate integrative medicine within my future practice as well.

I also know advocacy will be a strong part of my future practice. Sitting in a sociology class, my freshman year of college, I learned about systemic racism and social justice issues. Concepts completely new to someone growing up in a very homogeneous community. I instantly wanted to learn more, and wanted to do more. This led to me pursuing a career in mental health counseling, which led me to working in Palliative Care. My time spent with patients on the Palliative Care service showed me the importance of advocating for patients' wishes at the end-of-life. It also furthered my desire to do even more for people, ultimately leading me to medical school. In medical school, I devoted time to racial justice in medicine advocacy work. Advocating for everyone to have equity when it comes to healthcare and also their general quality of life, will continue throughout my life.

As a future resident, I will contribute empathy, maturity, a collaborative nature, and a strong dedication to rural health care. I am excited for this next chapter to deepen my knowledge and hone my skills for the patients I will be serving.