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A Memorable Mentor

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A person can come into your life for a moment, but make an impact that lasts a lifetime. This piece reflects my gratitude for working with my attending physician and all the teachers in my life who gave me the opportunity to learn and grow into the person I am today. *From the bottom of my heart, thank you.*

AUTHOR, SUMAIYA HAIDER

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A Memorable Mentor

Coming into my next rotation, I was ready to fall back into the monotony of the past few months. I pictured myself silently residing in the corner of the exam room where I would watch my new attending speak to her patients. I would ask her a question or two after the encounter, draft the relevant notes, and then leave for the day. The next morning I would wake up and do it all again. Or so I had thought. My new attending was intent on having me gain experience as much as I would gain knowledge. Patient histories, physical exams, diagnoses, medication management, pap smears, breast exams—I was expected to perform all these and more. I had never before been so involved and I was struggling to keep up.

She immediately recognized my unfamiliarity with patient interaction and doing procedures and encouraged me with words of affirmation, constructive feedback, and a guiding hand. I had difficulty in presenting, and not wanting to provide an assessment or plan unless they were perfect--- I was unable to express myself properly as I battled with my own expectations. She noticed my lack of confidence and delved deeper into the roots of my quiet apprehension--my family, my upbringing, my culture. Coming from a similar background as me, she often gave me advice she wished she could have given to herself at my age. On my last day of the rotation her best advice was given as her parting words to me:

"Sumaiya, stop saying 'I think'. You know."

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A good teacher knows their student. They learn their areas of strengths and weaknesses and cater their teaching in ways they know will help the student excel. Given the opportunity to see 10-12 patients a day, I broke out of my shell and began to speak to patients with ease. My attending provided a space for me to make mistakes and learn from them which in turn built my confidence.

Educating my patients on preventative medicine and the importance of mental wellness reminded me of why I went into this career. I had a passing interest in this specialty when I started, but in the span of a month I learned more about being a physician than I had in the past 5 months of rotations. My attending was skilled, outspoken, compassionate and everything I hope to be as a future physician. She far surpassed the scope of just being my attending and became an inspirational role-model. As such, I am certain that what she taught me in that short time will stay with me and take me far in life, and in my medical career

Sumaiya Haider is a third year medical student at KPCOM.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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