Why not consider becoming a doctor?

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The goals we set are fulfilled, and the dreams we hold are lived with our eyes wide open. For many of us, pursuing a career in medicine has been our main aspiration since childhood. We often envision ourselves as those white-coated heroes, carrying stethoscopes, or dreaming of becoming doctors for children. However, no one truly prepares us for the complexities of medicine —not only facing it with our eyes open but also with a heart that is at risk of closing off.

As medical students, we often find ourselves unprepared to manage specific situations firsthand. We observe silently or support our peers, only stepping in when given opportunities to engage with patients in basic ways, such as checking vital signs, taking medical histories, or practicing suturing. But what happens when we are merely spectators to injustices or pivotal life moments unfolding before us? In my view, these experiences are what ultimately shape us as physicians. Often, it is the seemingly insignificant incidents that inform our future critical decisions.

I remember a clinical case involving an average-built man with brown skin who appeared visibly exhausted. He entered the consulting room where I was merely observing. This man had every reason to live, except for an alarmingly low lymphocyte count of only 4/mm^3.

He had been diagnosed with HIV four months earlier after his partner tested positive, and he had adhered strictly to his treatment. Just the previous month, he had visited a doctor in perfect health with an undetectable viral load. However, his life had changed drastically in a very short time.

That day, I learned an invaluable lesson: timely patient education can prevent tragedies like this. This man, who worked in healthcare, had developed advanced Kaposi sarcoma on his limbs, marking the beginning of a complex battle ahead. The physician overseeing his care was exemplary in both treatment and diagnosis, but by the time we reached this stage, options had become limited. The primary recourse was to identify, diagnose, and refer him to the National Center of Cancerology. Despite the professionalism and empathy with which he was treated, the fragility of human life became abundantly clear at that moment.

Why not consider becoming a doctor? It requires immense strength to look into the eyes of those facing unfavorable prognoses and to offer the necessary care as positively as possible.

Being a doctor involves not only possessing clinical knowledge and technical skills but also the ability to establish rapport during the most vulnerable moments in people's lives. We must be prepared to educate, listen, and assist—even when situations seem insurmountable.

Resilience is also essential. Throughout our careers, there will be days when patients, out of frustration or fear, may speak badly of you behind closed doors. Yet, despite this, you must greet them again with the same warmth and joy. Learning not to take these situations personally is a lesson that takes time, but it is crucial for maintaining emotional balance in this profession.