

Sample Essay # (Podiatry):

The summer entering my senior year in high school, I sprained my ankle quite badly in a basketball game landing awkwardly after grabbing a rebound. The training staff at my school examined my ankle and performed serious strength tests and palpitations, gave me an ice pack, an ace bandage and an orthopedic physician. I was a starter and team captain, now handicapped to crutches and feelings of disappointment. Having to shift my weight towards my good foot to adapt to my injury became exhausting. My doctor, however, showed great empathy towards me. His passion to heal my body both physically and mentally brought peace and assurance to my situation. He also, inadvertently, sparked my interest in what would evolve into a career in podiatry.

Upon entering college, I placed myself on the pre-med track, while incorporating the social sciences into my education. I was taking the most difficult and challenging course I had ever experienced, yet learning the mechanisms by which we function as basic living organisms fascinated me. I found human evolution and the anatomy of the foot particularly unique and intriguing. Integrating the knowledge I have acquired academically into my own experience of having a sprained ankle has allowed me to understand the importance of having healthy, strong feet. I soon acquired an internship at my college's athletic training center, where I gained hands-on experience working side-by-side with trainers and physicians in evaluating and assessing athletic injuries, providing prevention education, treatment, and rehabilitation programs for student athletes and the larger college community. I observed how they would build a relationship with the injured students with light conversation and telling jokes in order to gain their confidence and ease the stress and frustration before inspecting the injury. The staff taught me that building a relationship with your patient is integral to the healing process.

I solidified my decision to pursue podiatry after shadowing Dr. Franklin Kase of Burbank, CA. I observed him from his initial encounters with patients to diagnosing their conditions, providing orthotics and performing light surgery. He showed me pictures of one particular diabetic patient who had suffered from numerous ulcers and lesions on his feet calves several weeks prior to my visit. There was a dramatic improvement leading to his current, healthy state, and it was nearly impossible to link this patient to the one exhibiting the conditions in the photos. The joy and gratitude displayed on the patient's face affirmed that he was most thankful to have someone who possessed the power to heal life-threatening ailment. It was awe-inspiring to witness the impact Dr. Kase had on this one man's life.

My own sports injuries, working as student trainer, and shadowing a practicing podiatrist have served to corroborate and enhance my interest to pursue podiatry. Over the years, I have matured both personally and intellectually and am confident a career in podiatry will fulfill my appreciation for an intellectual challenge, my desire to restore health in others, and provide for opportunities in which to specialize. Ultimately, I plan to open my own practice to serve a dual podiatry and sports medicine clinic and help those suffering from the many ailments of the foot.

Sample Essay # (Podiatry):

Sports have always been an integral part of my life. Growing up I was involved with five different sports, but soccer was my true passion. Unfortunately, it was the sport that induced the most injuries. Throughout my soccer career, starting with my first grade team, I underwent numerous lower leg and foot injuries that came and went. My solution was to deal with the pain and use any convenient treatment such as Advil and ice. My carelessness in injury prevention and treatment was what led me to an injury that would destroy my much-anticipated senior year of high school soccer: tearing my gastrocnemius. Out for the rest of the season after two games, my enthusiasm was torn like the fibers of my calf muscle. Although I could not physically play, I assumed the role of the assistant coach and I provided encouragement and advice during practices and games, prepared fruit for halftime rejuvenation, and helped treat any injuries that occurred. With the experience I realized that I wanted my future plans to consist of an athletic element.

Entering college I became interested in the sciences, in which, juxtaposed with my love for sports, I realized that sports medicine was the field I wanted to pursue. During my freshman year, I began working in the sports medicine department at school. There I helped treat athletes with basic injuries ranging from ankle taping to electrostimulation. With the majority of treatments devoted to lower extremities, my interest for the field of podiatry began to develop. After researching the field of podiatric medicine I realized its parallel with my interests. I even started a yearlong thesis (which I am currently still working on) that entails the exploration of gait stability influenced by varying types of shoes and types of walking surfaces. Ultimately, the goal of this research project is to determine what types of shoes and walking surfaces will most likely prevent falls in elderly people.

Although my work experience and research experimentation have solidified my interest of becoming a podiatrist, I wanted to confirm this interest by interning for a professional. I am currently interning/shadowing Dr. Franklin Kase, DPM in Burbank, CA, who had previously conducted an information session about the podiatric medicine field at Joint Science. Working with Dr. Kase and observing everyday procedures only elevated my enthusiasm about becoming a doctor of podiatric medicine.

Receiving a degree in podiatric medicine would allow me the opportunity to build a career involving the element of sports medicine. As a podiatrist I hope to follow in Dr. Kase's footsteps by contributing to the increasing recognition of the field. As the first Joint Science student solely focusing on podiatry school, I hope to join Dr. Kase in his annual information sessions at Joint Science, and provide my perspectives of the field as I undergo the process of each stage, eventually achieving a successful, well-respected podiatric practice.

Sample Essay # (Optometry):

“This is a cow’s eye. Compare it to a human eye.” To this day, I still haven’t forgotten this 15-minute dissection episode that I experienced as part of a 4th grade field trip to the Exploratorium, a hands-on science museum. Perhaps it was memorable because of the unsettling fact that there was this giant viscous blob sitting on the demonstration table for us to poke and probe. At the same time, I was extremely intrigued at how this little ball was capable of processing the multiple of constant outside information and producing images. I became more fascinated with vision when I studied developmental psychology and found that much of learning comes from visual pathways. When children are not prescribed corrective lens to aid them in seeing, their learning processes can be hindered, especially in less fortunate communities where resources are limited. If something as fundamental as vision can be helped, I want to train and develop skills that would assist me in providing that basic and primary health care.

Though I have found vision science an area where my intellectual and societal interests overlap, I have not taken the most traditional pre-health academic route. Exposed to science in elementary school through science fairs and experiments, I continued exploring science throughout high school, challenging myself with higher-level science courses as well as researching at a pathology lab during two summers. However, after graduating from high school, I felt that college would be the time to explore other academic fields because, until then, I had been mostly exposed to science. Not surprisingly, as I pursued my major in Psychology and Legal Studies with intent to go to law school, I noticed how my interests gravitated towards health and science topics, even in my non-science classes.

I do not, however, consider the change from law to medicine a complete turnaround, but rather, a strengthening of my interest in science and its context in the bigger picture. That is, my liberal arts education has given me insight into issues in society, especially in showing me how distinct disciplines are actually interrelated in the bigger picture. For example, the juvenile justice system is a problem in itself; however, when one looks at the different factors that may contribute to an adolescent’s vulnerability to delinquent behavior, one can find that he or she most likely is not attending school or is not receiving age-appropriate education. In schools, especially in poorer, urban areas, resources are limited and many children’s needs are neglected. One of them is vision. While schools may sometimes provide the basic vision acuity test (20/20 vision test), how well the child sees twenty feet away is not indicative of how the child sees at the reading and learning distance, about 11 inches from the face. One can see that if a child has difficulty reading because of vision-related problems that he or she is unaware of, this could lead to frustration and even an attachment label of being a “bad reader.” It is this link between vision and literacy that I find intriguing because it is a problem that can be solved, one which can have greater implications in child development.

Over the past couple of years, I also looked forward to the days I volunteered each week at the Children’s Hospital of Orange County in Southern California. In particular, I assisted with occupational therapy treatment in the form of karate class. Essentially, these children, diagnosed with a variety of illnesses, disorders or complications, learn karate while engaging in therapy. In one of the classes, three girls had vision impairments, ranging from partial to complete blindness. At first, I didn’t even realize that one of the girls was visually impaired because she had adapted so well to her everyday actions; I only knew she suffered from vision impairment when she mentioned her day in Braille class. While her vision condition was mild, another girl’s vision condition required more attention. I had to constantly rely on sounds and touch to guide her in

the right direction for the karate movement or to talk her through the movements to ensure that she wasn't in pain (she is also simultaneously battling another medical condition). Working with these girls and seeing their smiles and enthusiasm as they engage in a sport that physically and mentally challenges them, constantly inspired me. It made me want to learn about ways to aid them in working with their vision, so they could participate in daily activities and feel comfortable enough to venture outside of their comfort zone and try new activities, such as karate.

With my Doctor of Optometry (D.O.), I not only plan to participate as a primary healthcare provider, but to also utilize optics adapted towards distinct vision impairments so my patients can better adjust to their daily lives. Because the life and commitment of a doctor is to continually educate oneself with the changing medicine and technology, I would like to eventually find a way to bring basic vision resources and techniques to less fortunate communities, so that I could attempt to tighten one aspect of the gap caused by socioeconomic inequalities. It is for these reasons that I would like to pursue a D.O. so that I could continue to educate myself with the knowledge necessary to be an optometrist, and ultimately, a health provider and educator.

Sample Essay # (Optometry):

Unlike most people I seem to meet these days, I did not know that I wanted to be a doctor ever since I was a little kid. As a child, I found myself looking up to people and admiring those that had accomplished so many great things in their lives. I was especially amazed by Anne Sullivan's dedication in helping Helen Keller overcome her physical handicaps by teaching her to perceive the world in a different way. I have always found it impossible to imagine the dark and confusing world Helen Keller must have lived in without sight and sound, and thus have always found her mere existence to be a miracle. In seeing that Anne Sullivan played a big part in breaking through to Helen Keller, I have great admiration for Anne Sullivan and believe that her helpful efforts were comparable to that of a doctor trying to do everything in her power to help a patient. Medical professionals today have the opportunity to dedicate their lives to helping people, much like Anne Sullivan did for Helen Keller, and can think of no better and rewarding career for myself than one of serving the public by helping others see the world around them more quickly.

I have particularly found interest in optometry because sight is a perception that I have, in a sense, come to take for granted. For much of my life, I have had perfect vision as I watched those around me bet glasses and contact lenses. The first time I went to the eye doctor, I panicked at the thought of finally having to wear glasses. I thought that every decision I made between "1" or "2" would make a huge difference between whether I would get glasses or not, but the truth of the matter was that my eye doctor was just trying to make my life a little easier by giving me back a semblance of my 20/20 vision if I did not have it any longer. I did not end up getting glasses after that first visit to the optometrist, but today, I can thank my optometrist for alerting me to the fact that one of my eyes is a little short-sighted than the other eye. I was not even aware that my vision had changed at all, and learning that my vision was not what it used to be make me wish I had my "old vision" back and yet thankful and even indebted to my optometrist for doing her job. Upon reflecting on the start of my downward spiral towards increasingly impaired vision, I realized how vital the sense of sight is to everyone's everyday perception of life, whether it is for work and business or for taking in the simple pleasures of the world around us. As a result of my growing appreciation for my own sense of sight, I have gained interest in the field of optometry in hopes of being able to help others see better too.

I believe that my work and volunteer experience demonstrate my interest and desire to help other people. In high school, I completed community service at the elementary school I attended as a child, as well as at a nearby kindergarten in Arcadia, California. I learned that working with children was often a test of my patience, but at the end of the day, knowing that I could help and play with the children brought a smile to my face. Since this experience taught me that I liked working with children, I am currently a private tutor for a high school student and I can honestly say that being able to work as a tutor is often the highlight of my week. It is a gratifying to know that I can set time aside from my busy schedule to lend my knowledge to someone else that may be struggling with a subject in school.

The greatest volunteer experience I have had thus far has been Peer Listening, an organization in which I was involved for three years of high school. After many months of intensive training to be a Peer Listener, I was finally able to work with clients to help them through their personal problems. In keeping with the strictly-kept confidentiality agreement of the program, I cannot reveal any details about the clients or their situations here out of respect for my clients and for the program. However, the several opportunities I had to sit down with fellow students made me

realize that I rank high in sympathy and empathy; I often found myself in their shoes as I heard their stories and consequently felt about as lost as they seemed to appear. As such, it was not easy for me to be a Peer Listener because I did not want to fail my clients' expectations to help them find viable solutions to their problems. Nonetheless, I found the experience to be very valuable because I learned how to be more empathetic and attentive to other's needs.

My interest in optometry led me to volunteering at Dr. Tong's Center for Vision Development Optometry, where many parents come to have their children undergo vision therapy. I have learned that optometry can be much more than fitting glasses and eye exams and that there are more eye disorders than nearsightedness and farsightedness. I had the opportunity to observe several vision therapy sessions and am eager to learn more about how I may also work closely with children to help them correct any eye problems that may be keeping them from learning their best in school. I was surprised that I had never heard of vision therapy before and was intrigued to see that the main premise behind vision therapy was for patients to perform eye exercises under the supervision of a vision therapist in order to train eyes to work properly since often times the eyes are not working together as they should. Learning more about vision therapy gave me an even greater appreciation for the "behind-the-scenes-work" that optometrists are accomplishing today through such procedures as vision therapy/

Years from now, I hope that I will be able to use my skills and training to help improve the vision of many people in the community. I look forward to having a career in optometry because optometrists have the chance to improve a sense that many of us value: sight. Since optometry involves noninvasive treatment for patients, it seems to me as though few people are afraid to go to their eye doctors. I believe this indicates the necessity and appeal of eye doctors because people care about their eyesight and are not afraid to have a visit to their optometrists because vision is so vital. More importantly, optometrists not only care for the health of our eyes, but also our overall wellbeing since the onset of potential illnesses and diseases of the body first manifest themselves through changes in the eyes. I take so much comfort in knowing that optometrists care for my vision as well as my overall health, and I hope that I too can be a part of the field of optometry so that I can make the big difference in people's lives that optometrists are responsible for.