

I did an internship at Mary Washington hospital within the medical laboratory and it reaffirmed that I wanted to work within the medical laboratory. I have been in two different biological types of programs, one in high school and one in college. My career goal is to become a medical laboratory scientist and to really understand why I want to become a medical laboratory scientist you have to understand what has happened in my life medically speaking.

My mom was diagnosed with Sjogren's Syndrome in 2011 while I was in middle school. Throughout 2009 to 2011 my mom had flare ups that were unexplainable. The flare ups were caused by inflammation and the feeling of being dehydrated was caused by the flare ups, in a way. For about two years no one knew what was wrong with my mom and that terrified my family and me. We did not know if she was dying or if it was some type of chronic illness. In 2011 my mom went to a rheumatologist, who just by looking at her knew that she had Sjogren's syndrome. After my mom's was diagnosed my mom and I started to research the autoimmune disorder. We found that, in a way, Sjogren's can be seen as a steppingstone into other autoimmune disorders. My mom diagnosis led me to want to work in the medical field. I joined a Biomedical program in high school. The program allowed me dive into the medical field and figure out what I wanted to do within the medical field. During my senior year of high school, I did a yearlong capstone on Sjogren's. For the capstone I researched Sjogren's more in depth and then taught a class to future nurses. I hoped that by spreading the word about Sjogren's to future medical professionals would increase the likelihood of it being diagnosed more quickly. I hope that within the medical laboratory setting I am able to provide a results for people who have been searching for answers.

My little sister, Sarah, started to have many health issues and like my mom she saw many doctors before someone knew what was wrong. In elementary school, my sister developed an allergy to mint. This caused many issues for her and those around her. At first, we did not understand why she would have seemingly random asthma attacks, but we soon realized that the asthma attacks were a byproduct of an allergy. After figuring out that she was allergic to mint, this helped bring a piece of mind to our family, in a way. In late middle school, Sarah developed random fainting spells. From about 2015 to 2019, Sarah fainting spells got worse and she developed more symptoms. Slowly Sarah developed shortness of breath, trouble swallowing, and heat flashes on top of the fainting spells. During this time she went to the ER at least twice a year and it steadily increased as the years went on. She saw all types of doctors from a cardiologist to a gastroenterologist. They all confirmed that her organs are working properly and that she should not be having these issues. In 2019, Sarah was diagnosed with pectus excavatum. Pectus excavatum is when the sternum is concave instead of being convex. This caused the many health issues that she was experienced. In May 2021, my sister had surgery to correct the pectus excavatum. This whole experience with my sister and her health issues solidified my want to work in the medical laboratory field.

With pandemic starting in 2020 and on top of worrying about my sister I found myself wanting to help. I have always been passionate about science and wanting to help people. I really did not know what I wanted to do till my family really started to have "weird" health issues. Health issues that really are not the everyday type problems, talked about or known. I want to be able to help those who are in similar situations like my family. The long nights in the ER and then leaving without a clear answer about what was heartbreaking. I want to be able to help minimize those heartbreaks.