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Reflection

Coming into Longwood I wanted to be a cardiothoracic surgeon. I wanted the thrill and complexity of that career. While being at Longwood I realized that other aspects of my life were more important that I wanted to focus on and that was Family. I knew that having a family was extremely important so I had to reevaluate my career steps. After careful consideration, I decided that becoming a Physician's Assistant was the best route for me. I researched what entails this career and thankfully the courses I was taking at Longwood were right on track.

My internship was at Wardell Orthopedics in Suffolk, Va. My internship consisted of shadowing and discussion. While being in the office I was able to follow around three PAs – Dr. Mike, Dr. Shannon, and Dr. Diana. Although they all were general orthopedic PA's, they all worked differently with each patient. Through my experience there, I was able to learn that there is much more that goes into being a PA than I initially thought. After each patient, the PAs had to fill out paperwork and depending on the case it can be extensive. The paperwork depended, some being a prescription filling or to just update the system with new concerns/issues. I was able to ask questions about previous schooling and how to keep a personal life while doing PA school. I learned that although it is hard, it is doable. That being said, they suggested to get everything done now and then worry about the future later.

I was able to observe many different injections while working with the PAs. The most common injections I saw was either a knee or shoulder injection. These injections were with

muscle relaxers or anti-inflammatory steroids. They used different names back and forth depending on the PA's so it was slightly hard to keep up with the exact injection. Some were called trigger points, or SI joint injection. I was also able to see hand, hip, and back injections including epidurals. One, in particular, that was interesting was a facet. This was when Dr. Mike (who was the only one who did these injections) would go between the lumbar vertebrae in three different spots and inject with an anti-inflammatory steroid. The injections mostly are used to lubricate the joints or keep the swelling down. I was able to ask many questions about x-rays and how each injury works. The last thing I learned was how to be personable with the patients. Each PA was different, but I've learned so much from this experience and after the weeks I still am confident that being a PA is what I want to be.

This experience will help me with my future career because they showed me how to handle patients and be a good doctor even if the patient is being unreasonable. I was able to learn from the PA's how to read x-rays and understand the naming of conditions and medications. This will help me gauge my emotions while being a PA. This shadowing experience will help me understand what an office setting will be like and how to work with coworkers like RT's and Nurses. Overall I was able to get a good grasp on what being a PA will be like and what the job entails. That being said, I am very hopeful for my future and that I can have a career path in the medical field.