

Five years ago, as I applied in medicine, I wrote that “preconceived ideas of mental illness have given me the need to make a change and acquire a better understanding of the mysteries surrounding the human brain.” The same need is still in me as I go over that letter I wrote all these years ago. I still have an interest for the human brain, but my objectives are now more concrete, more thought through and, above all, more defined: I want to become a psychiatrist.

It would be very obvious to say that I went into medicine to help patients and contribute to society. However, after five years in medicine, that statement remains true. The moment has come for me to define the speciality that will allow me to help and make a difference in people’s life. After many clinical rotations and research projects, I see in psychiatry the best lever to contribute to the health and well-being of people and to give back to my community.

From my first day in medicine, I had a certain curiosity for psychiatry. In fact, prior to that, I got to work as a receptionist at the Pierre-Janet Hospital, the psychiatric hospital in Gatineau, during my time in college. It was my first contact with the reality of mental illness and its taboo. It gave me the will to implicate myself in this branch of medicine, and I first did that through research. Indeed, during pre-med I started by collecting data for my first project on lithium, which was recently published. I then wanted to have a more active role that requested more leadership skills. This is how I was awarded funds to complete a project that was published this year on ECT. I had the chance of presenting these two projects in many national psychiatric conferences. To start from an idea and see it bloom was an incredibly fulfilling experience and motivates me to pursue on with research. It explains my interest in your program, which would offer me the opportunity to do so. I would like, throughout my residency and career, to continue to contribute to the development of this booming speciality. It would fit my path to pursue an academic career and share my knowledge.

During clerkship, I was rather curious about the many fields of medicine. I appreciated each of my rotation as the great opportunities they were and even went as far as exploring them in some of my optional rotations, though none ever leveled up to psychiatry in my opinion. With my rotations in psychiatry, I realized that I could easily establish a therapeutic connection with patients with mental illness, and I wish to continue to work with that vulnerable population. I got to work with psychiatrists who encouraged me in this path after noticing my empathy and my listening skills. There are so many reasons why psychiatry brings a fire out of me. It is the perfect equilibrium between a constant intellectual work and a contribution to the health of countless patients. I found it fascinating to see the “finesse” and the approach that the doctors showed during their interviews, as every patient needs to be approached differently because each is unique. Each meeting was like a door opening on one’s interests, family, past, love and difficulties that brought him to seek help. I cannot wait to improve my interviewing skills and participate to your teaching sessions on psychotherapy.

In psychiatry, as in swimming or cheerleading, teamwork is essential. Having been part of many sport teams, I understand the importance of cooperation to reach a common goal, which in medicine is the patient’s well-being. A psychiatrist has a central role, yet he cannot disregard the rest of his team. He works alongside other specialists to ensure that every aspect of the patient’s state is under control. I was lucky enough to work with your dynamic and motivated team in places of choice such as the JGH and SMH. I had the chance to work with your residents and I quickly felt as part of the team. The atmosphere was great and the residents were just beaming; I, myself, felt more than comfortable amongst the team. My capacity to adapt has always allowed me to fit amongst work groups, whether they were made of colleagues or of interdisciplinary teams.

A psychiatrist needs to communicate with specialists and generalists. My social skills and my leadership will come of aid for this role of consultant. I was able to develop these skills with time as a representative of Canadian students in medicine in the International Congress held in Copenhagen, as well as in many national psychiatric conferences. During my consultation-liaison rotation, I was able to put these skills to practice in my meetings with treating teams. I have a great sense of initiative and that led me to take the lead on family meetings or multi-disciplinary rounds during my month on the psychiatric floor. The positive feedback that followed encouraged me to take on more responsibilities and direct myself towards more challenging cases.

Psychopharmacology is something that interests me greatly and I appreciate the fact that your program offers many hours of teaching on pharmacology. To be able to titrate and be aware of the secondary effect is an art and a balance that is essential. During my consultation-liaison elective, I saw another aspect of psychiatry that combined physical medicine and psychiatry and I thought it was incredibly interesting and relevant.

I am aware of the many challenges of a five-year residency at the McGill. I am ready to take on these challenges, as I took on the one to pursue my studies in English though I had always attended French schools. I have also been involved in many committees with proved to me that I can manage the stress resulting from these different commitments, as does clinician. Despite my volunteering in different organizations and my work in research, I was able to maintain excellent academic results. I am a person full of rigor, perseverance and deep sense of responsibility. I consider myself as a dynamic and polyvalent person, with a great capacity for adaptation. During my clerkship, the residents and staff gave me many responsibilities and thought I was reliable, organized and pleasant. These are assets that will help me, without a doubt, in completing my residency and that make me an ideal candidate in your radiology program!