

College Application Essay Examples 650 Words

When I was thirteen and visiting Liberia, I contracted what turned out to be yellow fever. I met with the local doctor, but he couldn't make a diagnosis simply because he didn't have access to blood tests and because symptoms such as "My skin feels like its on fire" matched many tropical diseases. Luckily, my family managed to drive me several hours away to an urban hospital, where I was treated. Yellow fever shouldn't be fatal, but in Africa it often is. I couldn't believe that such a solvable issue could be so severe at the time—so I began to explore.

The exploration led me to the African Disease Prevention Project (ADPP), a non-profit organization associated with several universities. I decided to create the first high school branch of the organization; I liked its unique way of approaching health and social issues. Rather than just raising money and channeling it through third parties, each branch "adopts" one village and travels there to provide for its basic needs. As branch president, I organize events from small stands at public gatherings to 60-person dinner fundraisers in order to raise both money and awareness. I've learned how to encourage my peers to meet deadlines, to work around 30 different schedules at once, and to give presentations convincing people why my organization is worth their donation. But overall, ADPP has taught me that small changes can have immense impacts. My branch has helped raise almost \$3,000 to build water sanitation plants, construct medical clinics, and develop health education programs in the small village of Zwedru. And the effect doesn't stop there—by improving one area, our efforts permeate into neighboring villages as they mimic the lifestyle changes that they observe nearby—simple things, like making soap available—can have a big effect. The difference between ADPP and most other organizations is its emphasis on the basics and making changes that last. Working towards those changes to solve real life problems is what excites me.

I found that the same idea of change through simple solutions also rang true during my recent summer internship at Dr. Martin Warner's lab at UCLA. Dr. Martin's vision involves using already available digital technologies to improve the individualization of healthcare. By using a person's genome to tailor a treatment for them or using someone's personal smartphone as a mobile-monitor to remotely diagnose symptoms, everyday technology is harnessed to make significant strides forward. At the lab, I focused on parsing through medical databases and writing programs that analyze cancerous genomes to find relationships between certain cancers and drugs. My analysis resulted in a database of information that

physicians can use to prescribe treatments for their patients' unique cancerous mutations. Now, a pancreatic cancer patient does not need to be the "guinea-pig" for a prototype drug to have a shot at survival: a doctor can choose the best treatment by examining the patient individually instead of relying on population-wide trends. For the first time in my science career, my passion was going to have an immediate effect on other people, and to me, that was enthralling. Dr. Martin's lab and his book, *Digital Healthcare: A New Age of Medicine*, have shown me that changing something as simple as how we treat a disease can have a huge impact. I have found that the search for the holy grail of a "cure for cancer" is problematic as nobody knows exactly what it is or where to look—but we can still move forward without it.

Working with Project ADPP and participating in medical research have taught me to approach problems in a new way. Whether it's a complex genetic disease or a tropical fever, I've found that taking small steps often is the best approach. Finding those steps and achieving them is what gets me excited and hungry to explore new solutions in the future.