

## AOA Guide Series: How to Write a Personal Statement

### Example of an Internal Medicine Personal Statement

“I’m sorry I’m having trouble with your questions, I just can’t think with this pain,” said Mr. F as I tried to fill out the admission History and Physical form. He had metastatic lung cancer taking over his skeleton, and had been admitted to the hospital in intractable pain. Before my sub-internship on an inpatient oncology service, I did not fully understand how my residents and attendings approached pain management. Through research and consultation, our team developed a strategy to control his pain and the side effects of his medications, eventually allowing him to go home to his family. I am attracted to internal medicine, not only because of the great variety of disease processes, but also for the opportunity for meaningful patient interactions. Furthermore, I am excited to approach new and intriguing diagnostic puzzles on a daily basis. The nuances of care that I learned through treating Mr. F, and the relationship I developed while working with him to control his pain, exemplify what draws me to the field of internal medicine.

Since beginning medical school I have been fascinated by the complex interactions between the systems of the human body. This curiosity has propelled me towards internal medicine, where the physician must have a strong understanding of the physiology and pathophysiology of each system to provide exceptional patient care. In Mr. F’s case, it was frustrating to see how, while keeping his pain at bay, his high dose of narcotics left him unbearably constipated, lethargic, and plagued by myotonic jerks. Guided by the attending, we searched the literature for adjuvant therapies to treat boney pain. Eventually, with careful titration and these additional medications, we were able to reduce his side effects while still maintaining his comfort. I enjoy this evidence-based approach to medicine, and have pursued research to further my understanding of pathologies and therapeutic approaches, specifically investigating GI bleeding in patients on antiplatelet therapy, and radiographic characteristics of hepatorenal syndrome. I am interested in a residency program with a strong clinical education as well as opportunities for medical investigation. I will likely pursue a fellowship in gastroenterology or infectious disease because of my desire to fully understand the intricacies of disease processes and delve deeply into a specific field.

Internal medicine historically places a strong emphasis on education. Teaching rounds on my internal medicine clerkship have further inspired me to pursue this specialty, with each patient discussion bolstering my knowledge base and clinical understanding. As I move into my final year of medical school, I find it rewarding to teach and orient third-year students new to the clinical experience, and ultimately I would like teaching to play a central role throughout my medical career. I have come to recognize that a strong clinician must not only pass on medical knowledge to his or her colleagues and students, but also to the patients that he or she treats. During my first two years of medical school I worked as a community service chair to provide health education to men at a local homeless shelter. While I enjoyed learning about diabetes and hypertension in the classroom, I felt that I truly understood the material when I was able to explain it to a room full of men eager to take control of their health. It was an honor to be the first medical professional with whom many of the residents had ever interacted. This relationship between patient and physician, so crucial for providing optimal care, is a cornerstone of internal medicine, and another reason why I have chosen this field.

Less than a week after Mr. F was discharged, on my last day on the service, he returned to our care. I will never forget our last conversation, when I went to tell him I would be gone the next day. “I’m really proud of you,” he said. I was not expecting to hear this from a patient, and I brought my eyes up to meet his gaze. “We can get lost and forgotten about in here, and you really stepped up for me.” The lessons I learned from his care, not only in pain management but also in the impact we could have for a dying man, will make me a better physician. I have chosen internal medicine because I want to treat patients with a strong understanding of every system. Moreover, what truly calls me to the field is the opportunity to use this knowledge to treat patients like Mr. F.