

When no one was watching, when I myself was not paying attention, in the quietest moments, and the slowest of time, I changed - ever so slightly, and perhaps more subtly than the dandelion seed changing course and dancing in a summer breeze. Just as the seed makes its gentle way along the currents, I twirled and shifted in every tiny gesture throughout the year. The delicacy in how third year has changed me is amazing. I was expecting rockets, fireworks, and startling truths; instead, I redid, reanalyzed, redirected myself just a bit, day by day, in order to adjust to my constantly shifting environment and in that process found myself where I am today - different, yet somehow the same.

Although I saw various patients with many of the same complaints in all of my clinics, each interview was different from the last. *"Headaches: Don't forget to check visual fields."* I would tell myself, remembering this crucial detail I had forgotten in another patient the week before. The next clinic, it was the fundoscopic examination; after that, looking for associations between headaches and childhood nausea; then I learned to distinguish basilar-type from cluster versus migrainous or tension headaches; later, I made the association between the patient's bupropion and the worsening headaches despite improving depression; finally, I made recommendations based not only on possible new medications, but also adjustments to current medications for other conditions and optimizing doses to perhaps treat both high blood pressure and migraines. I never jumped from first to last, but always made adjustments - here, there, as well as again and again when I forgot.

Most beautiful of all was that as time went on, adjustments from OB/GYN made their way into medicine clinic, cases from surgery clarified radiology, and neurology brought pediatrics to life. As the year went on, a series of previously disconnected topics merged into one and medicine became living, breathing, challenging but incredibly fulfilling.

Likewise, the history and physical went from rote memorization to dynamic and freely floating, even effortlessly changing gears to match the patient's thoughts and desires but always gathering the pertinent information. There was no *"Wait I'm sorry, we are not at family history just yet"* because it all became who my patient was, not a series of disjointed paragraphs meant to somehow convey a continuous story. When the fluidity of the interview no longer required thought or effort, I learned to pause where tearful eyes sought silence. As my mind grew freer without the constraints of constant concentration on what slowly had become more natural over the course of months, my curious eyes discovered previously undiscussed psoriasis, bruises, tremors, and the silent echolalia of lips telling the story of early-onset Alzheimer's.

What amazes me the most about the past 12 months is that I didn't notice the change until someone told me. He told me that I had helped him; she told me she was so grateful that she wanted me over for dinner to meet her grandchildren; he told me that he didn't usually talk about these kinds of things but he felt like he could trust me; she told me that I would make a phenomenal doctor very soon. Each time something was said, I was taken aback - was I not just the medical student who had been swept away by third year, too young and inexperienced to know what to do but flounder? But there I was, gracefully and gradually arriving at the destination I had never dreamed possible - confidence in my ability to care for a patient.

They tell us that third year will change us, that we won't believe it ourselves, that our families won't recognize us in our splendid knowledge or whatever that doctorly swagger may be, that society will respect us, that we will be different... *"I will be so different,"* I thought last year, *"So, soo different..."* and I feared it greatly. Instead, I have changed carefully and precisely in all the ways that matter, but I am otherwise mostly the same. I thought I had exchanged my identity for a stethoscope but found myself pleasantly surprised to see that when I opened my eyes, I was only wearing it.

*By Jacqueline Boehme, a graduate of University of Central Florida and Burnett Honors College. Jackie is currently taking an enrichment year at Harvard Medical School to research surgical outcomes and think about the path she'd like to take through residency; she plans to graduate in 2016. Her ultimate goal is to be a physician who works with patients who have poor access to health care in her home state of Florida.*