

· W O R T H Y ·

2020 Worthy Women's Scholarship – Finalist Essay

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I am a Physical therapist with about 20 years of experience in healthcare. I immigrated to the United States when I was 25 years old with a Bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy. Because my educational credentials had to be verified, it took almost two years after I arrived in the United States to even take the board examination that would allow me to work as a Physical Therapist. I worked and studied at the same time in a new country, with new perspectives, limited income and a desire to improve myself. I have amassed a wealth of knowledge since moving here, I have gone back to school for the post professional Doctor of Physical Therapy degree which I paid for by working 3 jobs, one, after my regular 8 hour shift and the other ,every weekend including most holidays.

In my career as a Physical Therapist and a working mom of two young children, I have recorded several successes and achievements. One of such achievements which I am particularly proud of is the establishment of a lymphedema clinic at a 300 bed Hospital in Illinois. I wanted to specialize in Lymphedema and Cancer care and that, required approval from my superiors for training out of town. I went with my mom and my infant child who was being nursed at the time and I had to pass 2 exams upon completion of the training. The lymphedema clinic is a project I led from conception through to completion. Establishing this clinic gave me my first exposure to management as I oversaw various tasks such as defining project objective, scope and executing the project in an efficient manner. I was responsible for coordinating a team of physical therapists in the clinic, developing policies and procedures for the clinic, implementing processes to ensure efficient and effective service delivery to patients, marketing the clinic to doctors to get referrals and build a roster of patients in order to make the clinic a financially viable initiative for the hospital.

Leading this initiative to establish a lymphedema clinic provided me great visibility and exposure to management as I became the subject matter expert on lymphedema and cancer care in the hospital. It also raised my awareness of a dormant passion that I have-process improvement, quality and process efficiency. I have realized that I can be more effective in a health care management role as I believe that my clinical skillset can be brought to bear in a management role and it is for this reason that I enrolled for the Masters in Management with a concentration in quality improvement in healthcare , as I believe a degree such as this will enable me provide value in a management role in any healthcare organization.

In my current position, about 85%of my workload is to treat women with all various types of cancers that require Physical therapy, which is really every cancer diagnosis and I have enjoyed the process immensely. I work with a great team of healthcare professionals that make working seem effortless and we strive to work seamlessly to ensure patient satisfaction. I have realized that although we do our best and we have the best ratings, patients still have goals that have not been met. One recurring question I get asked by most patients is 'now that I have completed all my treatments, now what'? A question that has not received satisfactory answers as I am usually the last person they look to for answers as I spend a substantial amount of time with them over the course of their treatment.

I want to change that narrative, the narrative of the unknown. I want to bridge that gap that exists between high quality care and mediocre care .I want patients to know what is next in their plan of care, I want us as healthcare professionals to be upfront with patients so that their quality of life can improve, so that they stop living in fear. In our ever changing and fast paced healthcare world, I know that it is easy to go through

the motions when treating our patients, and that, inadvertently drops the quality of care they deserve/require and that, needs to change.

A strategic approach which may involve setting industry standards or benchmarks for various types of cancers, upgrading communication levels, setting clear objectives for the patients, analyzing their needs and setting reasonable goals which will be dependent on their diagnosis would be expedient .I believe that better service delivery while being profitable can be achieved if more healthcare professionals were involved in healthcare quality management. The Master's degree I believe will give me the requisite skillset needed in a management role. Upon completion of my degree, I want to move into a strategic leadership role in a health care system. There, I will be able to leverage and merge my new skills with my knowledge, skills and experience in healthcare to develop functional strategies, sound decision making and high-quality patient care.