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Mr. Speice

Independent Study and Mentorship- 3A

28 November 2016

### Interview Assessment 3

Name of Professional: Dr. Lynn Huffman

Profession: Cardiothoracic Surgeon

Date of Interview: November 22, 2016 at 3pm

Assessment:

Coming into this interview I was slightly stressed knowing this was my first interview with a surgeon, someone who could help me network with other surgeons. In this interview I hoped to better understand what it is like to be a cardiothoracic surgeon from the life experiences of an experienced surgeon.

In the beginning of this interview I explained what the Independent Study and Mentorship program is, and why I was specifically interested in pediatric cardiothoracic surgery. I followed by asking what the biggest challenge in his career was, and how he coped with those challenges. Dr. Huffman answered by explaining the stress of having to handle many things happening at once and how every single surgery is important, someone's life is in your hands. However, Dr. Huffman said there are more rewards to this career than there are challenges. Being able to save someone's life everyday never gets old. He also spoke of the importance of appreciation and passion in being a cardiothoracic surgery, and how the need to want to continuously learn was essential to his career. Next I asked what made being a cardiothoracic

unique from other cardiothoracic specialties, Dr. Huffman explained that this is a career where you are constantly on call and that there can be an emergency at any point in the day. Transplants are also an essential part of cardiothoracic surgery. Since I have an interest in possibly working abroad with my career I asked Dr. Huffman if that is something he has done in his career, in which he replied he has, but it is extremely challenging since supplies are quite limited. These first questions really allowed me to see what this career entailed in a bigger picture. It allowed for all my research on cardiothoracic surgery come to life through the career of a successful and experienced surgeon like Dr. Huffman. He made me see that this career is feasible with hard work and passion, and is something that I should continue to study in ISM.

To better understand what a day of a cardiothoracic surgeon entails I asked Dr. Huffman what an average day for him was like. Although the day of a cardiothoracic surgeon can vary usually starts with early rounds followed by meetings and after that the OR where he will work one to two cases, and after that clinic. You must also take in account office hours and possible emergencies that may follow. My next question, a question I ask on all my interviews is what are something that surprised you about this career and why? Dr. Huffman answered by explaining how many people drive by hospitals everyday, never appreciating how great their life really is. Most people think that it will never happen to them, but once something does everything stops, and what once mattered suddenly is not important and how we truly live on borrowed time. This made me realize the impact I could make on someone's life as a surgeon, and what I would be experiencing everyday. It made me realize that I would be a part of possibly the hardest part of someone's life and how my career could help ease this part of someone's life. In the beginning of

ISM I knew I was looking for a career that would allow me to leave my impact in the world, and through Dr. Huffman I can see how I could be doing that everyday as a cardiothoracic surgeon.

I followed by asking about the long educational path to becoming a cardiothoracic surgeon. It starts with two years of undergrad, two years of grad school, two of masters, followed by four years of medical school and five years of general surgical residency. This is followed by two years of research, three of cardiothoracic surgery, and lastly one year of thoracic surgery. This did not come to me by surprise, since I mostly knew what this long career path entailed. I did however learn that most surgeons take a couple years of their educational path to conduct research before specializing in a specific surgical career path. Dr. Huffman showed me several journals in which other doctors display their research findings. I realized I have been researching off of journals all along, and that a great reliable way to find specific articles for further research could be in these cardiothoracic journals. My last question for Dr. Huffman was if he had any advice for a high school student like me which he answered by reminding me to always have passion and a love for learning, and he also gave me advice on making a publication. His advice on creating a publication is something I had not really thought of as possible for a high school junior, but I believe is something that with the help of a mentor could be very possible. Dr. Huffman followed to explain in detail what a publication would include: abstract, review, journal. Although this is something quite difficult, it could be a possible final product idea that I had not thought about before that would truly push my boundaries of research in ISM.

Overall this interview has immensely increased my knowledge in cardiothoracic surgery, which is very beneficial when studying pediatric cardiothoracic surgery. This interview also

allowed me to create a network with cardiothoracic surgeons at UT Southwestern Medical Center, and gave me more confidence in a career I am possibly pursuing.

Notes:

What are the biggest challenges that come with your career and how do you code with those challenges?

The career is challenging itself, many things happen at once, and every surgery is important. However, it is very rewarding.

Appreciate, have passion

LEARN

What makes your job so unique, and unlike many surgeons?

Oncall, emergency, transplant, donor

Abroad- limited, this is very challenging

What is your average day like?

Get up early, rounds, meetings, 7am OR, 1-2 cases, clinics

What is something that surprised you about this career and why?

People who aren't sick, don't know what is happening, once someone is sick everything stops

What education have you gone through to achieve your career?

Undergrad (2 years), Masters (2 years), Medical school (4 years), general surgery (5 years), residency, research (2 years), cardiothoracic surgery (3 years), IT

Advice:

Make a publication

Abstract

Review

Journal

People I should interview: Dr. Sarah Gualano, Dr. Scott Reznik, Dr. Kernstin

