

Professional Philosophy Statement

Katie Halliwell

College of Public Health, University of Georgia

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Growing up and having my own personal experiences has led me to be the person I am today with the beliefs and values I hold true to myself today. While there are countless experiences that have influenced me and what is important to me, specific ones come to mind when I think of what is important to me concerning health promotion.

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in healthcare. Whether it was playing pretend doctor with my friends and siblings or having a million questions to ask my pediatrician each year for my annual checkup. When the time came to start applying to college, I realized I would have to pick a specific major. While I knew healthcare was my passion, I didn't know what would be the best fit major for my future. After taking a deep dive into educating myself on all health-related majors and options I could pursue for a future in healthcare, I came across public health. By reading all there was to know about this major online and researching what specific classes I would take as homework for my college counselor. I came to the realization that this major would embody all that I want to do and am interested in. I was so scared that wanting to be pre-med or pre-PA would have me taking rigorous science classes like chemistry and biology. While I had to take some of those classes, classes like Community Health and Public Health would prepare me to be well-rounded and understand the importance of health promotion as I strive to be a physician's assistant. The steps to understanding that this was the right path for me was done through cognitive thinking. I educated myself about my options and used this information to make an informed decision in my major.

When I was in elementary school, my mom was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. I remember vividly her getting very sick and frustrated that nothing was helping her feel better. She went to doctor after doctor. As a kid, it was sad to watch and even more confusing to understand what was going on. After trying medicine after new medicine, therapy after new

therapy, there was a drug that finally seemed to help her control her symptoms. From time to time, she would have flare ups or better or worse months but overall, her disease became manageable. My mom's PA was so beyond helpful in educating her both about the disease, but also how to advocate for herself and to explain alternative information that could help. For example, my mom researched and advocated for herself to try the new medicine that ended up working best in controlling her symptoms. Through shared knowledge from her PA my mom also discovered that cutting out gluten from her diet helped mitigate her symptoms significantly. Growing up I became inspired by this PA, especially because of everything she did for my mom. As a college pre-PA student I actually have had the opportunity to shadow her. Seeing this side of her occupation has been so eye-opening for me. It is very full circle having someone who has helped my mom so much and seeing what they do to help lives on a daily basis. It wasn't until shadowing the Rheumatologist PA that I understood how important patient education truly is. Especially in her essence, she is dealing with autoimmune and inflammatory diseases that can be very complex. Besides diagnosing, it is vital that she makes sure patients understand what is going on in their bodies and discusses different solutions and options when it comes to treatment.

I currently work at a healthcare office in Athens called Athens Area Urology. While my job tasks consist of walking back patients to their rooms and running lots of urine tests and cultures, I learn more and more each day. Calling patients back from the waiting room and giving them directions allows me to make a bond with the patient by having casual conversations. Typically, since I am one of the first employees patients interact with, they have questions for me. Because I am not an educated doctor who specializes in urology, I don't usually know answers to complex questions, but it is important that I know the basics of the types of procedures, scans, and typical diagnoses at the office. A huge part of what I watch the doctors do

is break down what conditions mean, what surgeries are for and will be like, and why certain injections and scans are needed. Educating these patients is super important so they know what risk factors to look out for, how to care for themselves, and how to make informed decisions for themselves. In each patient room there are certain diagrams on the walls and pamphlets given to patients to further educate them on diagnoses. I see first hand how important these are especially to many elderly patients that come in. They always want to have copies of information to share with their spouse or family members.

This past summer I went on a medical internship trip in the Dominican Republic. I could go on and on about what a life changing experience it was, how much I learned, and all the cool things I was able to experience. It truly was a one of a kind experience that I wouldn't trade for the world. Six days of the trip, we set up clinics in different villages that were free for anyone to come to to receive medical care from doctors and access to medicine. As an intern, I was doing tasks such as taking vitals, helping fill out intake forms, shadowing doctors, and working at the pharmacy tables. It was very eye-opening to see how healthcare worked in a different country especially in rural, low-income areas. People coming to the clinics were very uneducated and unaware of many health problems and risk factors in their lives. While shadowing, the doctors emphasized to us that besides diagnosing and prescribing medicine, educating these patients about their personal health is super important to make a difference in their lives. They don't always have access to healthcare and medicine so making them aware about risk factors and symptoms is super important to keep them healthy. Because I am pretty proficient in Spanish, the doctors would let me run the conversation and be able to tell the patient about important things as well as ask them questions. Seeing healthcare in a different light truly was such an amazing learning experience. This trip made me more interested and passionate about global health so

much that I added a minor in global health. In the future I want to make a difference within health disparities in lower income and poorer countries. I think this starts with health promotion and education.

Overall, these experiences were different in many ways, but all led me back to the concept that education is needed in order to increase awareness, promote health, and make informed decisions. This aligns with the cognitive-based health promotion philosophy. What I have come to believe health promotion is all about is enabling all people to control and improve their health and I personally believe the best way to do that is through education and awareness. Patients need education and awareness to be able to make the best decisions for themselves.