

As I approached the age of eight, I struggled with medical issues: asthma, food allergies, epilepsy. With continuous coughing from asthma attacks and restricting food diets, I thought I had it rough. Yet, I was nowhere near prepared to hear of the disease that would endlessly affect my life as well as my family's.

At such a young age, I could hardly comprehend the entirety of the impact of this disease. I did not fully grasp the thoughts of organ failure or kidney transplants, dialysis or high blood pressure. At first, I saw no threat within the situation. The disease actually made me feel more mature as a kid. I would pretend to shave next to my father and take medicinal pills with my mother. My parents and I made a game to urinate in a cup and container to ensure I would not miss and use the toilet. We would take annual trips to visit my Pediatric Nephrologist at University of California, San Francisco; we would then visit Pier 39 and other San Francisco attractions. I saw no faults with this disease, but as I grow older, I can now see the full effects on my life.

At the age of 12, my parents reannounced the information of this disease to me, giving me the true realization of Alports. I learned I was taking Lisinopril to slow the effects of kidney failure while I took yearly 24-hour urine collection samples to bring to my Nephrologist in San Francisco. Along with my personal reactions to Alports, I learned of the family history with this disease. My grandmother passed Alport Syndrome to my mother, however, my grandfather suffered from a renal disease for many years. He experienced hearing loss and received dialysis treatment; symptoms that are similarly found in Alport Syndrome. My uncle, who has the disease as well, is the model of how my future can unfold. He suffers from hearing loss, diminished eyesight, dialysis treatment, reduced diets, and is also waiting for his second kidney transplant.



Seeing my uncle, mother and grandparents all experience this disease just gave me a greater insight to my future. I can now expect what is to come and know that it will all be okay at the end of the day as they are now.

As to my future, with Alport Syndrome a great barrier in my life, I continuously reminded myself that my dreams are far greater than possible to achieve in spite of great hardships. By the age of 30, I hope to be successful in my dream profession as an obstetrician/gynecologist. However, this dream was also chosen by my beliefs as a victim of Alports. This disease has affected myself but overwhelmed my family, the ones that I truly love who instilled my morals into my heart; I value my family above all.

My father made a great decision and sacrifice once I was born. With asthma, food allergies and Alport Syndrome, my parents were hesitant to leave me with other care takers and babysitters. My father chose to quit his job to stay home and care for my sister and I. I value my family because my father made a grave sacrifice of temporarily giving up his work for more than ten years because he felt no one else was qualified to raise us. Therefore, I can only hope that I can be an awe-inspiring father like him. His sacrifice of giving up the work he loves and the money he would have earned motivates me to become a wonderful father some day. My mother also took on the burden to continue working twice as hard to make enough money for our family. Although I wish to become a great father, sometimes I am a bit distraught as I realize my genetic code will be passed onto my children. I think it automatically makes me a poor and imperfect father as there is a heavy possibility that I will give them this disease; they will be carriers or develop the effects of the disease later, for which in turn, I blame myself. I blame my asthma for occasionally slowing me down during a cross country race. I blame my food allergies for



limiting my diet and preventing weekend outings. I blame the factors that follow within my genetic code. And I feel ultimately empathetic for passing on these difficult circumstances that my children will face as well. I want to be an obstetrician because I value the life of a baby, the essence of life and purity. I want to deliver healthy babies into this world. And for those who are unfortunately not healthy, I know better than anyone that the child will grow and flourish above it all only if the parents are able - if the parents are as loving and dedicated as my father and mother are. I want to give back to my parents for all that they have done for me with the Paul Silver Award. I want to help them fund my college career by using the \$1,000 towards college expenses. The awarded money will be used to directly benefit myself and my parents, and I believe there is no greater investment than the one I make in myself.

Norman Cousins quoted "Each patient carries his own doctor inside of him." Inside me, inside my genetic code, Alport Syndrome has defined my life since birth - as a disease, catalyst and doctor. It has nurtured me into the person I am today. I thought that for the past seventeen years of my life, I have been nothing but a patient - nothing but visiting hospitals, meeting with doctors, enduring check-ups and procedures, and waiting for the day I receive a new kidney. But reflecting back, applying to colleges and asking myself "what truly defines me," I see that family is the most important thing to me. I still feel sorry that my kids will inherit this disease but I know I will be their backbone through it all, just like my family has been for me.