

Dear Dr. John,

Who can argue that the road to becoming a physician is one of the longest and arduous endeavors of man? During our pre-medical years, many students become inspired to be a physician so they can help people, go on mission trips, work in underserved areas, etc. Of those students, those of us who are accepted to medical school excitedly begin our first year full of dreams and hopes that we can change the world through medicine. Second year is marked by an intensity to prepare for Step One boards, and students become increasingly fatigued. We spend endless hours holed up inside cramming information down our throats only to vomit it all back out during exam week buried in the bowels of the testing center, all to achieve the scores that will snag us the residency we desire. Relationships, health, many of the activities that once brought us refreshment are now put on the backburner. Already we begin to wonder, "Is this constant struggling really worth it?" When third year begins, we are once again excited to embark on a new phase of our medical career – the clinical years – a time to put into practice all we have been learning and dreaming. Now, however, weekends once marked by a time for rejuvenation are ripped away, 24-30 hour calls exhaust the body and mind, and 4:30AM pre-rounding schedules cut down on or completely eliminate devotional life.

Many of the physicians we work with each day have completely forgotten why they chose medicine and have become burned out and cynical people. After having this modeled to us each day, a student can wonder, "Is medicine really anything more than just a good method to make money to pay for a Bed and Breakfast stay in Santa Barbara or a round of golf each Sunday or a nicer car to get to the hospital more expediently in the morning?" Thus the dream for medical mission work, if ever present in the first place, begins to die.

As a third year medical student, this is the pattern I have seen in my experience at Loma Linda University. Thus I am pleading with you to help show us a better way. Please return to Loma Linda to share with us how medical missionary work can practically be done. Much of what we are seeing modeled to us now is in clashing disharmony with the motto of Loma Linda University to "continue the healing and teaching ministry of Jesus Christ to make man whole." Some of my classmates have expressed frustration that they feel as if Loma Linda promised something that was never delivered – practical training in how to minister as Christ did. Thus they feel disillusioned and cheated and end up only focusing on merely surviving their medical training.

My desire is for physicians practicing medical ministry to come to Loma Linda for training sessions once a month. Several organizations are in place on campus to provide advertisement and support for such events. Advent Hope, AMESA (the student chapter of AMEN), Mission Interest Group, Preventative and Lifestyle Medicine Interest Group, and others would be willing to help host these weekends.

Consider your classmates. How many of them are now practicing the medical missionary work Loma Linda was founded upon? This death of the dream is

happening to too many of my own classmates, and I am calling on you to help me put a stop to it. Please consider donating your time to share with us how to practically fulfill the gospel commission through medicine.

His handmaiden,

Sarah Belensky
Class of 2013