

Deeded Body Memorial Service Speech  
Megan Cannon

Hi, My name is Megan Cannon, and I am a second year physician assistant student at Carver College of Medicine. Prior to attending PA school I was a registered dietitian at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. I spent my days as a dietitian working directly with patients in clinic and inpatient. I enjoyed relating to patients and talking to them about their health. I was used to helping people by discussing health, nutrition, and body functions. I thought I knew a lot about the human body. I was wrong. As time went on working as a dietitian, I thought I was very comfortable working with patients. But again, I was incorrect. I realized that I was afraid to touch patients and even when I needed to do a physical exam on them to make a diagnosis, I just felt uncomfortable and awkward.

When I was accepted into PA school, I was excited to learn and experience many new things. I wanted to be able to provide more comprehensive patient care, not only nutrition intervention. I knew that one big change I was going to need to make in my practice and interactions with patients was getting more comfortable with physical touch. I was going to have to get over my hesitation and do thorough physical exams in order to be a good PA.

I had very minimal undergrad experience working with the human body. My anatomy and physiology courses were mainly conceptual with no real hands on learning. Prior to starting PA school, I had not really thought much about anatomy or working with cadavers, but I knew that it was going to be a part of my training. It definitely was not something I was looking forward to, in fact I was almost dreading it. My goal going into anatomy lab initially was to get into lab and get out in the shortest amount of time possible. Needless to say, during my first lab I was very apprehensive, and I wasn't sure if I would be able to do it.

After completing the first lab, my perspective completely changed. All of my apprehension was gone, and I felt like I learned more in that three hours in lab than I had all week studying diagrams. I soon realized that there was no better way to learn than from my donor in lab. I often studied the structures and concepts prior to going to lab to try to develop a base knowledge, but I was almost always surprised once I saw the different structures and touched them for myself. Suddenly it all made sense. Through working with my donor in lab, I quickly became more comfortable with physical touch and understood the value of physical touch even more. As a result, this experience has made me more comfortable when working with patients.

The human body truly is fascinating, but throughout my time working in lab I couldn't help but think that it's not just a body. Our donor was a person who lived a long life and left loved ones behind. At first, I felt sad and weird thinking about who she was. On the first day of lab, I cried just thinking about the life she lived, the people she left behind and the loss they must feel. It made me think of my own grandma who I was very close to and the loss I still feel since she passed away. I couldn't help but put myself in the shoes of my donor's loved ones. It made me really value her and think of her as one of my loved ones which was good and bad at times. I just wanted to know more about her. When I would see her hands, I thought of all the people who held her hands. Grandkids? Friends? And all the things she did with them. Work? Hobbies? I often wondered who she was? Would we have been friends? Who did she leave behind and how were they grieving her loss? Regardless, I already thought of her as a friend and

one of the most generous people I knew because she gave the most intimate gift one has, her body, to help me learn. It is the ultimate gift and will continue giving.

I am motivated to use my education for the good of others because of the sacrifice my donor made. I ended up learning significantly more than ever possible in any other way from my donor. The things I learned will carry me in my career as a physician assistant in the future. I am motivated to use my education and talents to help others even more after being inspired by the gift that my donor gave me.

I would like to offer sincere condolences for the loss of your loved one. Thank you for supporting them in the decision to donate their body and for contributing to my education. To my donor, thank you for your selfless gift. You inspire me, and your legacy will live on not only through your loved ones but also through me and all that you taught me. I am grateful for your generosity, and I promise to be a good steward of the knowledge I have gained from you and use the lessons you have taught me in my future medical practice and in my personal life.