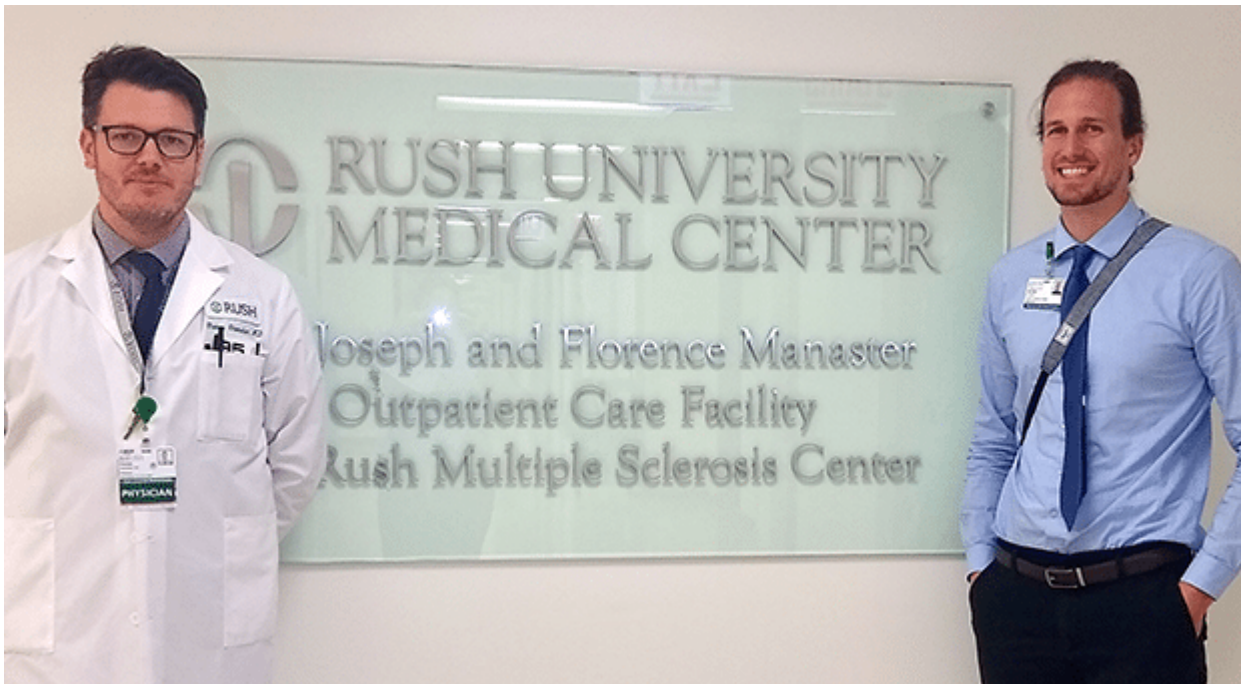


My Memorable MS Mentorship in the Midwest



In a few months, I will be an MD graduate. It's amazing how fast time flies by. Looking back at my last four years of medical school, I am nothing but amazed at the experiences I've had. Yes, it was tough, but eventually I learned to enjoy the great experiences that come with studying medicine. I became my own advocate for my education.

Neurology is my interest, so when I heard about a mentorship offered by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. My close relative lives with multiple sclerosis, and this mentorship meant a lot to me on a personal level. I wanted to find out more about the neurological disease that affects almost a million people in the United States and what advances were being made in the field to find a cure.

I put together an application, hoped and waited. Before I knew it, I received an acceptance, and I was off to Rush Hospital in Chicago, one of the top comprehensive care centers for multiple sclerosis in the United States. I connected with several experts in the field, including my mentor Dr. Shoemaker, who welcomed me with open arms. He introduced me to all the staff that I would be working with. Thanks to him, we came up with a tailored plan that would help get the most out of the experience.

As quickly as I became oriented, I was off seeing patients; one of the most enjoyable experiences. I learned firsthand how to take a focused history and perform a comprehensive neurological exam on multiple sclerosis patients. I learned how the disease affects all age groups and can manifest in a multitude of ways, including speech, cognition, mood and

mobility.

When not in the patient room, I spent my time learning as much as I could about the patients I saw. I began with the basics, the McDonald Criteria, which is a guide to help diagnose multiple sclerosis and was recently revised in 2017 to prevent misdiagnosis. I studied brain imaging findings, symptoms and the vast array of treatments available. With help from peer reviewed articles, books, listening to expert opinions and online resources, I was knowledgeable enough to put together three presentations on the FDA approved drugs for multiple sclerosis and presented them to residents and physicians.

Although there still is not a cure, the surge in treatments available to patients now to help them live their best lives, which gives me hope. Working with one of the senior physicians of the Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence, Dr. Stefoski, I gained more insight about the disease. He was one of the people who played a role in developing Ampyra, an FDA approved drug which is the only drug to restore the function of nerves in patients with multiple sclerosis. He explained the pathophysiology of multiple sclerosis elegantly and would pick up on the slightest of details to better manage patients. Then there was Dr. Ko, who advocated for effective treatment. With him I met a patient who went on remission for years after taking cladribine, a very effective and novel medication that's just beginning to become used for multiple sclerosis even though it has existed for years.

The experience I gained was invaluable, and it made me excited to begin a career into neurology. The members of the National MS Society were also very pleasant and held a celebration at the end of the mentorship asking about our experience and feedback. My mentor, Dr. Shoemaker, has kept in touch with me, even to this day where I shared with him my Match into neurology. With such great people in the field of neurology and multiple sclerosis, I am confident in a bright future ahead. I greatly appreciate the time I spent on this mentorship and highly recommend it to any other student interested in the field of neurology.