

Average medical student: An oxymoron?

One day it dawned on me that I was average. Yes, the seven-letter word that pre-med students fear most.

Jasna Levi, BSc, MSc

Every year for the past 17 years UBC medical and dental students have put on a spring gala to raise money for charity and showcase their talents. To show my support, I not only purchased a ticket, but got tickets for my whole family. By the end of the night, I turned to my mom and told her that maybe I shouldn't have given up the violin lessons—maybe then I could have had something to contribute to this amazing event.

“All of these students are either medical or dental students?” my sister asked.

“Yes, it's amazing isn't it?” I replied.

I watched, transfixed, as my classmates transformed into opera singers, flamenco dancers, and concert pianists, and I suddenly started to feel inadequate. It occurred to me that the notion that all medical students are cocky and full of themselves is inaccurate, as here I was asking myself how I had made the cut. I tried to recall

Ms Levi is a medical student at the University of British Columbia, in the class of 2014.

This article has been peer reviewed.

my most recent accomplishment, and realized it was getting accepted into medical school. I still vividly recall that day and how great I felt about myself. To be honest, it was probably the best day of my life (since I don't have kids yet and I'm not married, that statement is maybe a little less lame than it sounds). That memorable day was followed by a great summer of revelling in the knowledge that I never had to take the MCAT again or fill in another medical school application (at the time I was blissfully unaware of the CaRMs process).

I realized that evening that I had spent almost 6 months of my first year riding out the wave of greatness of getting accepted into medical school. I once heard someone say that the first time they felt like an underachiever was once they started medical school, and in that moment I finally understood the feeling. Med students are on an even playing field when it comes to sleep deprivation and dependency on Starbucks, but it's humbling to find out that your classmates have played on national sports teams, gone to trials for the Olympics, or got accepted to med school at age 19. The things that once made you feel special are now commonplace, as medical schools select the cream of the crop. Each one of my current classmates was the best

in their school or first in their class, had several research projects going during every school year (and even over the summer), and probably volunteered overseas at least once or twice. It dawned on me that I was average. Yes, the seven-letter word that pre-med students fear most. Average doesn't get you into medical school, but it's certainly what you become once you get in.

While contemplating my insecurities I recognized some positives: I am always striving to learn and accomplish more, and my recognition of the talents of my fellow classmates could inspire me to take inventory of my goals and aspirations every once in a while. I can apply the energy that I may have spent stressing about my insecurity to keeping myself in check and acknowledging that I still have room to grow as a person and a future physician. After all, I'm way too young to peak this early, right?

By the time the gala was over, I'd managed to stop feeling sorry for my lack of special talent and realize how grateful I am to be in medical school surrounded by amazing people who are doing amazing things. It makes me want to be amazing myself, and that's not so bad after all—actually it's great.