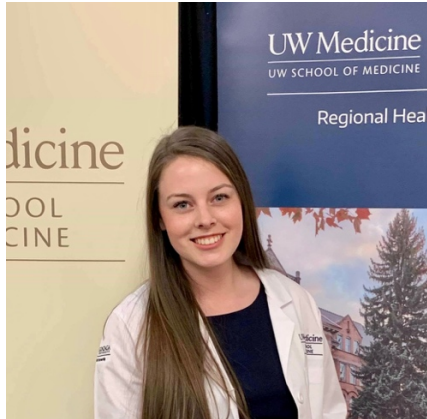




Student of Medicine

Katie Combo, UW School of Medicine



Place of Study

Spokane, WA

Institution

University of Washington School of Medicine

Type of Degree

M.D.

Typical Day

No two days are exactly alike, but in general the program does a really good job of combining class time with clinical exposure. On a given day, I'll arrive at Sacred Heart Hospital at 8 a.m. to interview a patient and perform a physical exam. At 10 a.m. I'll present my findings to my mentor group. At noon I'll grab lunch before heading to lecture at 1:00. After two hours of lecture I'll meet with a smaller group of students and a professor to work through cases involving the material we're learning. At 5 p.m. I'm ready to head home to study, eat dinner, and relax with my roommate.

What I Love About My Program/Future Field of Medicine

The UW School of Medicine has really amazing professors and physicians who are very dedicated to their students and passionate about medicine. The program also pairs students with a physician mentor as well as doctors to shadow, which gives us a great support network as well as exposure to clinical medicine. Compared to other medical schools, UW in Spokane is also a bit smaller than most programs, which I really appreciate because I feel like I've gotten to know my classmates and professors really well. Finally, I love that medicine is rooted in science but also involves interacting with people and caring for patients.

Education and Career Pathway

I grew up in Missoula, MT and Spokane, WA before going to Mercer University in Macon, GA. At Mercer I was a biology major with a chemistry minor. Going into college, I had an interest in medicine and science and I knew that I wanted to pursue a career within the medical field. While in college, I had the opportunity to be a part of a medical mission trip which confirmed my desire to be a doctor. After I graduated, I worked as a medical assistant and scribe so that I could get more experience in a clinical setting. While I worked, I studied for the MCAT and applied to schools.

Most Important Skills Needed

- **Adaptability** – the structure of medical school is probably going to be different than any other schooling you've had before, and it's important to be able to adjust your study habits.
- **Communication** – medical school about more than just studying. It's really important that you communicate clearly with your classmates, professors, mentors, and patients.
- **Patience** – with yourself and with others. Medical school is a big adjustment, and it can take some time before you feel like you have the hang of it, so being patient with yourself is really important. It's also really important when you start to interact with patients.
- **Work ethic** – there is a lot of material to learn, and it requires you to work hard and be disciplined

Science and Engineering Practices I Use

In medical school, our classes focus heavily on scientific principles that help us understand the systems of the body, disease processes, and injuries. It's a dynamic combination of biology, physics, and chemistry that comes together in a really amazing way. To list a few of the principles we use:

- **Cell Biology** – we spend a lot of time making sure we have a solid understanding of what is happening in the body at the cellular level so that we can better understand what is happening when patients present with a certain set of symptoms
- **Pressure differences** – this helps us understand how the heart pumps blood, how blood flows through the body, and how oxygen is delivered
- **Pharmacology** – it's important to understand how different medications work in the body, potential side effects that arise from them, and how they interact with other medications

Technology and Equipment I Use

- There's a lot of amazing technology in medicine – so much, that some people dedicate their entire career to that field. But there are a few tools that all physicians learn to use while in medical school:
 - **Stethoscope** – for listening to heart and breath sounds
 - **Otoscope/ophthalmoscope** – for looking into ears and eyes
 - **Reflex hammer** – to check patients' reflexes
 - **Ultrasound machine** – for imaging
 - **Other imaging technology** – while medical students don't learn how to operate x-ray or CT machines, it's vital that we learn how to look at and interpret the imaging from these machines

Encouragement to High School Students

The road to becoming a doctor can be a bit daunting at times. First you have to go through a lot of effort just to get into medical school, and then you have to actually go through medical school. But I think it's all worth it! If you focus on why you really want to go into medicine – whether it's because you have a passion for science or feel fulfilled by helping people – it can help you stay focused. Throughout the application process, I often doubted my ability to get into medical school; I struggled through some of my pre-requisites and wondered whether I was cut out for medicine. But I didn't give up even when classes were hard or I felt burned out, and now that I'm in medical school, I can say that it was worth it!