

Watching care delivery in a rural setting inspires desire to give back



Jamie Tuchscherer clearly remembers the date when she found out that she had been accepted into the Physician Assistant program in the OHSU School of Medicine. “December 19th,” she said. “I could probably tell you what time it was as well. I was elated.”

Raised in Adel, a southern Oregon town of 112 people, Jamie was the only student in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades at her middle school. Her parents, who were science teachers, fostered her scientific interests. Some of her family members had Type I diabetes, which made her realize how important it was to have good medical care, especially in small communities. Following high school in Lakeview, Jamie began college at Eastern Oregon University, in La Grande, Ore.

“I thought I was heading towards becoming a physician,” she said, “and took the usual pre-med courses.” However, she started to revisit her career options halfway through college, completed a nutrition course at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Wash., and then worked as a dietetic intern and a dietician for six years in Klamath Falls and Bend.

“I worked with dialysis and diabetic patients and loved what I was doing. But I wanted to do more. I wanted to help the whole patient.” Jamie saw how fully the Physician Assistants were involved in the care of each patient, and “that was when I decided I wanted to become a PA. The only place I wanted to do that was at OHSU.”

Three months into the course, Jamie is still excited. “It’s been challenging sometimes, but a great experience.” She and her classmates take their anatomy course alongside the first-year MD Program students, as well as physical examination. “As a dietician you are rarely in physical contact with your patients. Learning how to perform an examination has been a revelation.”

“Each member brings something to the class,” she said. “I learn from everyone. I bring my experience in renal and dietary issues, as well as growing up in a rural community where resources are fewer and health care professionals fill many roles. I saw what rural practitioners did for my own family. This is my chance to give back.”



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