"White Coats"
By: Josh Davies, MS4

This graphic story is inspired by an interaction I had with a 3rd year medical student while I was on my 4th year Cardiology Elective.

The white coat has become synonymous with medical student training and education. But beyond that, I have found that it symbolized my growth and maturation as a physician in training.

During my first few years, my coat was nothing more than something that hung in the back of my closet as I studied for hours on end, learning about human anatomy, the basic sciences and organ systems of the human body. Throughout this time, my coat slowly started to amass materials to use: my stethoscope, otoscope, ophthalmoscope, etc. Though, I really didn't have any affection towards these things, nor my coat, as all I really knew was what I had been reading in textbooks my first two years - nothing about patient care.

Third year of medical school is arguably the most difficult, most challenging and most rewarding of them all. There is so much time spent on the wards, and in clinics. So many new things to learn, both big and small. And each little paper stuffed into the white coat pocket becomes so invaluable as the months go on. They are cheat sheets, lab values, pocket books and little hints picked up along the way. By the end of third year, the student is literally and figuratively weighed down by the physical and mental stresses associated with the coat and it's contents.

By 4th year, there is a steep learning curve that hits you almost out of the blue, and immediately. Students start to realize they don't need the ward books and cheat sheets in their pockets. For the most part, they know what they're doing, they know the pathology, the pharmacology, etc. And most of all, they feel comfortable managing and treating patients. The coat has become a symbolic medium of my transition from knowing close to nothing as a 1st year, to amassing tons and tons of knowledge and practicing skills, to installing it all permanently in my brain.

The moral of the story is that the "it" of medical school will eventually "click" for most if not all students. It happened for me early on in my 4th year. I finally felt like I was exactly where I was supposed to be, and I was talented enough and smart enough to become a physician.

Thank you for taking the time to read this graphic novel of mine. I truly appreciate it and most of all...I hope you like it!
WHITE COATS

A GRAPHIC STORY BY:
Josh Davies

The day started like every other with our team rounding on the cardiology ward...

I was a 4th year med student who couldn't wait for graduation and residency. When suddenly...

4th Year Coat

Hey! Why do you have hardly anything in your white coat?!?

This question seemed to have come out of nowhere.

2nd Year Med Student

The student white coat is short, symbolic of our junior standing in medicine. Here, it was obvious our coats differed in tidiness.

However, at that moment, I could not think of a good answer to her question. I had to recall all my years with my little white coat....
"...Josh D., The Ohio State University."

"We're pretty much doctors already!"

"I think my coat is too small."

"We were excited to get our white coats."

"They were symbols of our introduction into medicine."

"Is this a nerve?"

"Wait... what did he say?"

"However..."

"We sure didn't feel like doctors."

"First year was mostly anatomy, lectures, and studying."

"Lots of studying."
YEAR TWO

In our second year, we started learning how to use our equipment (albeit, not very well).

But there wasn’t much doctoring, as the second year was even more intensive!!!

...but after board exams were over, we were ready to hit the wards with our white coats at the ready........
YEAR THREE

Pathology Cheat Sheets
O.R. Schedule

Patient Labs
Surgery Ward Books

Hi, Mr. Smith. How are you feeling today?

5:55 P.M.

We have an admission. Go see it.

During third year, we started seeing real patients and got to start practicing real medicine!

However, despite the excitement (which quickly wore off), third year became tiresome and stressful.

I began to wear out, and the weight of my coat made it worse.

Nejm

With long hours...

Information overload...

And the continuous pressure to perform...

You're not typing stinky

REYNOLDS PENTAD:

...Jaundice...
...Fever...
...Rash...

...Shock...

Zzzzz
Year Four

She is febrile, jaundiced, has RUQ pain and is hypotensive. It's possible she may have ascending cholangitis.

A funny thing happens during 4th year. You realize you know what you're doing, no longer needing cheat sheets or books.

You become confident in your abilities; so much so, you feel comfortable teaching younger students.

I determined my coat had been somewhat of a medium for my growing confidence and medical knowledge during my training.

I decided not to share my realizations with that 3rd year student.

Figuring out the answer to her question is an important milestone in one's medical career. Residency