



THE CALLING

A MEDICAL SCHOOL JOURNEY

Educational Guide



www.thecallingfilm.org

Meet Ghaith |



Meet Ghaith Al Tibi, a first-year student originally from Syria, who credits his parents — both doctors — with inspiring his decision to pursue a career in cardiology.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learners will be able to:

1. Identify how family background and cultural heritage can influence educational and career aspirations.
2. Explore the challenges and opportunities immigrant students may face when entering demanding professions like medicine.
3. Reflect on the influence of role models and family legacy in career development.

BEFORE- VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How might having parents in a particular profession influence what career a person chooses?
- Why might someone be drawn to become a heart doctor?
- What unique strengths or challenges might immigrant or first-generation students face in pursuing demanding careers?

Meet Ghaith |



AFTER- VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How might being originally from Syria influence Ghaith's perspective as a medical student in the United States?
- How do role models, especially parental ones, influence career aspirations?
- Can you think of similar examples in your own life or others'?

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

How has someone in your life, either a family member, teacher, or community member, influenced your goals? What legacy do you hope to continue or create?

Meet Andrew |

Meet Andrew Peck, a Haitian American first-year student from Queens who hopes to mentor other aspiring physicians from underrepresented backgrounds. Andrew's profile affords a conversation about mentorship and representation.



■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Understand how personal identity and cultural background inform motivations and aspirations in medical careers.
2. Recognize the impact of mentorship in shaping inclusive and community-oriented medical practice.
3. Reflect on representation in medical education: who is seen, who is supported, and why diversity matters.
4. Analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by underrepresented medical students in predominantly conventional academic environments.

Meet Andrew |

BACKGROUND READING

- Building Bridges: The Importance of Mentorship for First-Generation Physicians
- Read a Letter to the Editor about the importance of mentorship. What do you learn about the author's experience?

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- How might a medical student's cultural or social background influence their approach to medicine?
- Why is it important to have role models or mentors when pursuing a challenging goal?
- Why might representation be important in healthcare professions: for patients, for providers, and for the healthcare system overall?

After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- In what ways did Andrew's Haitian American identity influence his decision to pursue medicine and his hopes for the future?
- How did Dr. Phang's mentorship shape Andrew's understanding of what it means to be both a physician and a community advocate?
- Why is such mentorship critical in medical training?
- How can diversity enhance the learning environment and patient care?

Meet Jordan



Meet Jordan Giordano, a first-year student from New Jersey and a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve, who is attending medical school through an Army scholarship program. His father, a New York City firefighter who perished in the Sept. 11 attacks, inspired him to serve.

■ **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate how hands-on training (e.g., casualty drills) prepares students for real-world challenges.
2. Reflect on how systemic problems in healthcare call for leadership and change from new generations.
3. Explore broader implications of military-affiliated paths to careers in public service and medicine.

Meet Jordan |



BACKGROUND READING

- Families of fallen 9/11 members continue the tradition of bravery.
 - Inspired by their parents' legacy, a new generation of IAFF members are answering the call in New York City.

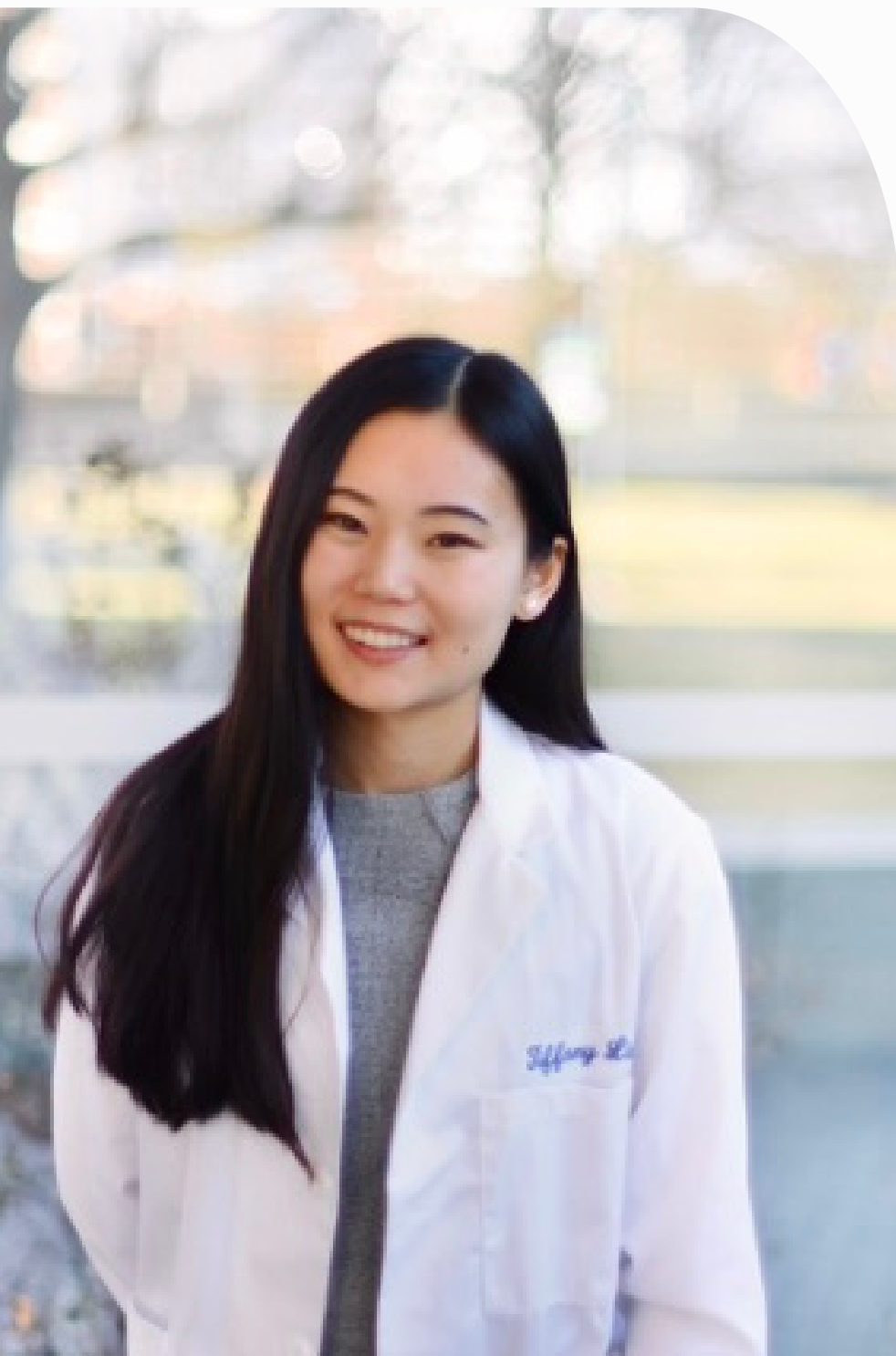
■ Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- How might the memory or legacy of a lost loved one influence someone's career choices?
- What does it mean to serve a community?

After-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- Jordan describes his father, a firefighter who died on 9/11, as the root of his values. How does this personal loss influence his path toward medicine and military service?
- Jordan is going to be the first doctor in his family. What challenges does being the first to pursue an academic or professional goal pose?
- Towards the end of the video profile, Jordan talks about systemic problems in the U.S. healthcare system. Why is it important for medical students to understand these challenges as part of their education?
- Can you think of someone in your life that motivates you to serve or pursue a goal?

Meet Tiffany |



Meet Tiffany Liu, a first-year student from central Florida. Growing up in a majority-white community with Chinese immigrant parents, Tiffany was determined to study medicine in a diverse area like the Bronx, where she could serve patients from all backgrounds.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Understand how cultural background and environment influence feelings of belonging in demanding fields.
2. Reflect on the emotional experiences of entering a challenging academic path.
3. Explore the importance of empathy in the field of medicine.

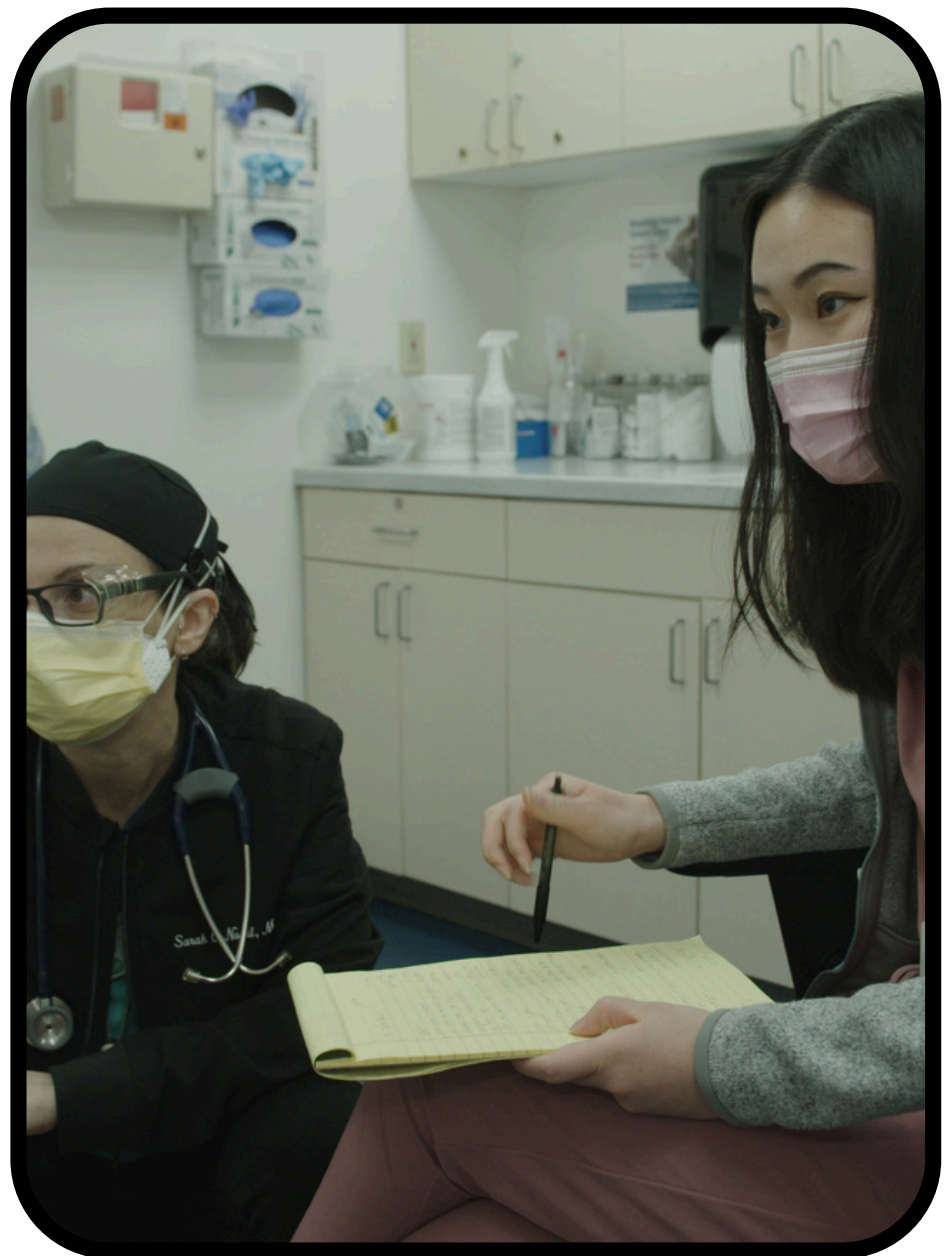
BACKGROUND READING

- The Power of Belonging in Medical Education
 - Listen to this podcast about the role of belonging in the medical profession. What are his key points?

Meet Tiffany |

BACKGROUND READING

- Building Bridges: The Importance of Mentorship for First-Generation Physicians
- Read a Letter to the Editor about the importance of mentorship. What do you learn about the author's experience?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- How might being from a cultural or ethnic minority influence how someone experiences a new environment like medical school?
- When you are experiencing academic stress, what kinds of encouragement or validation might matter most?
- What do you think makes someone good at a job?

After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- Tiffany grew up in a majority-white community with Chinese immigrant parents. How might her upbringing have shaped her desire to study medicine in a diverse borough like the Bronx?
- What emotional challenges did Tiffany face in her first weeks of medical school, and how did she confront them?
- What did the patient's comment, "You're going to be a really good doctor," signify for Tiffany's understanding of her purpose?
- How might you describe what a "good doctor" means in the context of this video?



Le'Shauna

Meet Le'Shauna Phinazee, a fourth-year student and the first in her family to attend college, who dreams of leaving the harsh urban environment that has shaped her family's past and hopes to secure a radiology residency at a top hospital in the South.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Identify how an individual's background can inform and shape their career goals.
2. Explain how socio-economic context and geographical aspirations intersect with identity in shaping professional choices.
3. Reflect on how personal and community contexts can both challenge and inspire academic and professional ambition.

Meet Le'Shauna|

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- What does it mean to be the first in your family to achieve something (graduate, attend college, pursue a career)?
- What might be some unique challenges faced by first-generation college students entering competitive fields like medicine?
- Why might someone want to leave their hometown for their career or return to it?



After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- How does Le'Shauna's identity as a first-generation student shape her goals and motivations in medicine?
- What does her story reveal about the interplay between personal history and professional aspiration?
- Le'Shauna talks about moving to the South for a radiology residency. Why is she considering this move? What does this tell us about her values?
- Le'Shauna describes that when patients can relate to their doctor, the patients are more likely to trust. What are some ways that doctors can relate to patients?



Meet Alexandra |

Meet Alexandra Perez, a fourth-year student and the youngest daughter of Dominican immigrants, who hopes to find a family medicine residency that will allow her to stay in the Bronx and serve the community she loves.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

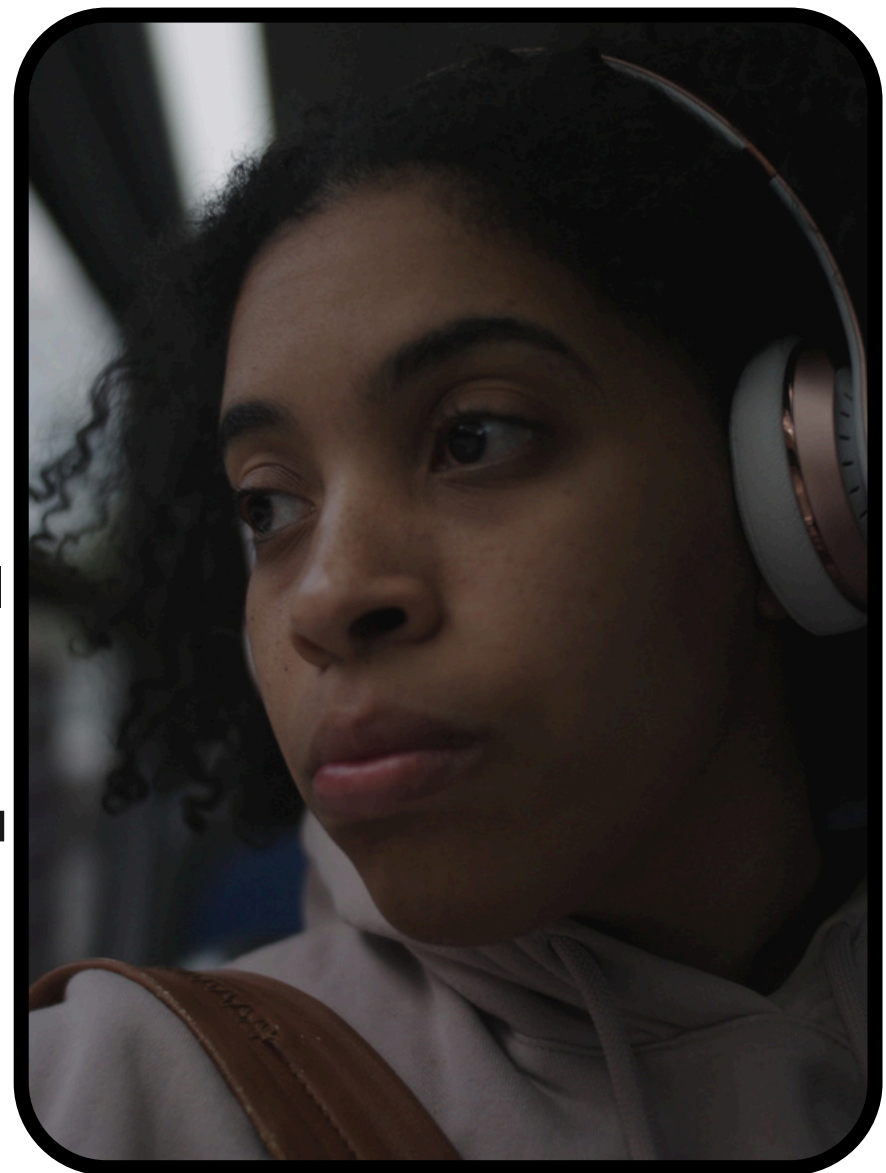
By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Understand how cultural and geographic roots can guide aspirations in service-oriented professions.
2. Reflect on the power of representation and its impact on belonging.
3. Evaluate how personal history can transform into purpose and how identity informs professional choices.

Meet Alexandra |

■ BACKGROUND READING

- Representation in Medicine
 - The Association of American Medical Colleges releases statistics about representation and diversity in medicine. What do you notice as you look through these statistics?



■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:

- What does it mean when someone says they want to give back to their community?
- How might where you grow up influence your career choices?
- Why might family medicine be especially meaningful to someone who grew up seeing community healthcare needs firsthand?

After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- How does Alexandra's identity and upbringing in the Bronx influence her decision to pursue family medicine in her own community?
- How does Alexandra's story connect to your own ideas about "giving back" or serving where you come from?
- How does Alexandra's identity contribute to her ability to build trust with patients in the Bronx? Can you think of other contexts where representation matters in fostering trust?
- What qualities do you see in Alexandra based on hearing her story?



Meet Chetali |

Meet Chetali Jain, a third-year student from the Detroit area who feels called to emergency medicine, a field that links the social side of medicine to a wide range of specialties and embodies her desire to care for patients of all backgrounds.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Reflect on how cultural and regional background can inform choices and aspirations in medicine.
2. Analyze the challenges students face in balancing patient care, exams, and personal well-being.
3. Reflect on the importance of empathy and resilience.

Meet Chetali |

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:**
- Why do you think some people might avoid doctors for many years, and what challenges might that create when they finally seek care?
- What helps you personally when you feel overwhelmed by learning



After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- Chetali explains that at the free clinic, students were “often people’s first doctor in decades.” What challenges and responsibilities come with being someone’s first medical contact?
- How did Chetali’s role at the clinic change from her first and second years to her third year?
- During the portrait, she screens a patient for mental health conditions. What does her approach show about empathy in medicine?
- Chetali speaks openly about the stress of medical training. If you were in Chetali’s shoes, what strategies would you use to balance patient care, exams, and your own well-being?



Meet Cory |

Meet Cory Ransom, a third-year student from New Jersey who is driven by a life-threatening childhood illness that required multiple brain surgeries and interested in pursuing a career in pediatric neurology.

■ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

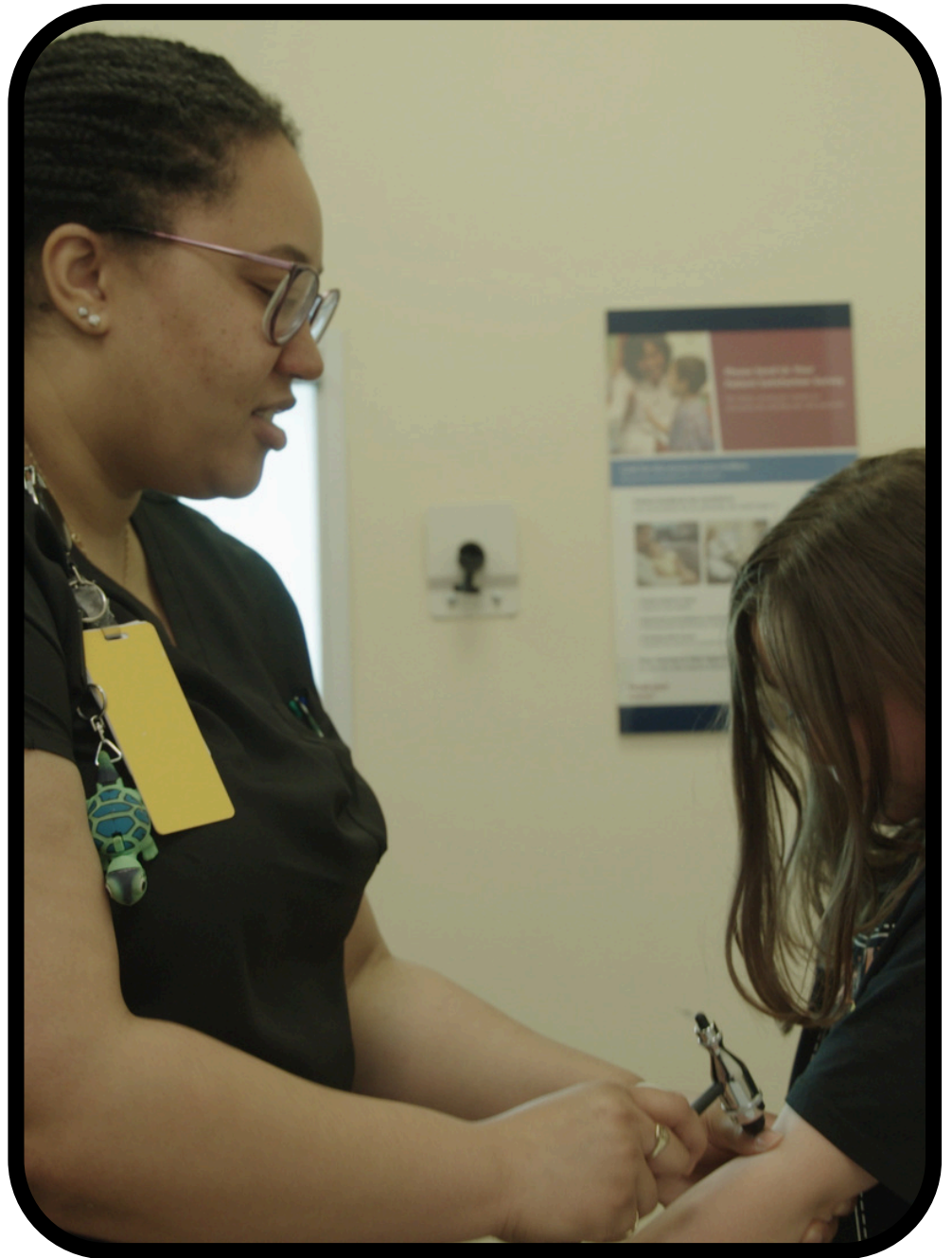
By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze the role of leadership and community involvement in shaping career interests.
2. Reflect on how lived experience can inform professional purpose.
3. Explore the importance of empathy.

Meet Cory |

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Before-Viewing Discussions Questions:**
- How might experiencing a serious illness change the way someone thinks about healthcare? How might it change the way someone thinks about their life?
- Why do you think representation in doctors who share your background/identity matters for patients and communities?



After-Viewing Discussion Questions

- How did Cory's childhood health challenges influence her decision to study pediatric neurology?
- What do her roles in SNMA and the free clinic reveal about her identity and values as a future physician?
- What lessons can we apply from Cory's story to our own lives when facing challenges?

REFLECTION

Have you ever faced a challenge (personal, health-related, social) that made you think differently about what you might do in the future? Write about how that experience has shaped you or continues to influence you.



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 1: Excel in High School (Grades 9–12)

Goal: Build a strong academic foundation and prepare for college.



What to Do:

- Focus on science and math courses: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Calculus.
- Take Advanced Placement (AP) or IB courses if available.
- Maintain a high GPA (aim for 3.8+ if possible).
- Join extracurriculars:
 - Science clubs, debate, sports, or leadership roles.
 - Volunteer at hospitals or clinics (even basic roles count!).

Develop strong study habits and time management skills.



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 2: Get Into a Good College/University (Pre-Med)

Goal: Complete a Bachelor's degree with prerequisites for medical school.



What to Do:

- Choose a major you enjoy – common ones include:
- Biology, Chemistry, Neuroscience, Psychology, Biochemistry
- But any major is OK as long as you meet med school requirements
- Complete pre-med prerequisites:
- 1 year of Biology with lab
- 1 year of General Chemistry with lab
- 1 year of Organic Chemistry with lab
- 1 year of Physics with lab
- 1 semester of Biochemistry (often required now)
- Math (Calculus and/or Statistics)
- English/Writing

Tips:

Aim for a GPA of 3.7+ (especially science GPA).

- Join pre-med clubs or student organizations.
- Do clinical volunteering (hospital, hospice, EMT, etc.).
- Gain shadowing experience (follow doctors to see what they do).
- Get involved in research if possible.

Build relationships with professors for letters of recommendation.



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 3: Take the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test)

Goal: Score competitively to apply to medical schools.



What to Do:

- Take the MCAT after completing key science courses (usually junior year).
- Study for 3–6 months using:
- Prep books, online resources, practice tests, courses

Aim for a 510+ score (out of 528) for competitive schools.



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 4: Apply to Medical School (During Senior Year of College)

Goal: Submit a strong, complete application.



What to Do:

- Apply through AMCAS (for MD schools) or AACOMAS (for DO schools).
- Prepare:
- Personal Statement
- Letters of Recommendation
- Work/Activities section (extracurriculars, clinical, leadership, research)
- Secondary applications (essays for each school)

Interview at medical schools (traditional or MMI format)



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 5: Attend Medical School (4 years)

Goal: Learn medicine and prepare for residency.



What to Do:

-  Structure:
- Years 1–2: Pre-clinical (classroom-based science and foundational medicine)
- Years 3–4: Clinical rotations in hospitals (internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, etc.)
-  What to Do:
- Pass Step 1 and Step 2 CK of the USMLE (for MD students) or COMLEX (for DO students)
- Choose your specialty by the end of 3rd year

Apply to residency programs during 4th year



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 6: Complete Residency (3–7 years)

Goal: Get specialized, hands-on training in your chosen field.

Examples:

- Family Medicine: 3 years
- Internal Medicine: 3 years
- Pediatrics: 3 years
- General Surgery: 5 years
- Neurosurgery: 7 years

You are officially a **doctor** at this stage, but you're still in training.



Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

STEP 7: Optional – Fellowships or Board Certification

Goal: Further specialize (e.g., cardiology, oncology, critical care).



What to Do:

- Fellowships: 1–3 extra years after residency

Take board exams in your specialty to become board-certified

Step-by-Step Guide: Becoming a Doctor

Summary Timeline:

AGE	STAGE	DESCRIPTION
14–18	High School	Prepare academically and volunteer
18–22	College/University (Pre-med)	Bachelor's degree + MCAT
22–26	Medical School	MD or DO degree
26–29+	Residency	Paid training in specialty
29–30+	Fellowship (optional)	Super-specialized training

Final Advice:

- This is a long journey, but it's worth it if you're passionate about helping others.
- Stay organized, ask for help, and build a support system.

Medicine requires discipline, empathy, and resilience – develop all three.