

Medicine

Chafen Hart, '03: I started medical school one week after graduating with a degree in government in 2003. I loved the study of government and found a way to integrate medicine into my thesis by studying transnational medical networks in Reynosa, Mexico. I am a firm believer in the physician as a "man of letters" as termed by William Osler and studying government gave me tools to more deeply understand and analyze the ethical frameworks of medicine and their interplay in Western culture. My government background also helped me gain perspective on the active community health programs and their interplay with small village politics in Vellore, India while on a rotation at the Christian Medical College during my fourth year in medical school. I am currently back in Boston at Tufts-New England Medical Center starting my residency in pediatrics while my husband, whom I met in our sophomore government tutorial, pursues an MBA at Harvard Business School. It is possible, if difficult, to concentrate with honors in government and complete premedical requirements. I strongly encourage people with medical school in mind to broaden their educational base and take advantage of the best of Harvard.

Sachin H. Jain, '02: After graduating Harvard College, I attended Harvard Medical School. At Harvard Medical School, I was active in the student government, serving as president of my class and the student council. I also founded ImproveHealthCare.org, a web site and national student group that aimed to educate medical students about health care policy. I co-edited the book, *The Soul of a Doctor* that was published in 2006 by the Workman Press.

After completing three years of study at Harvard Medical School, I decided to attend Harvard Business School. Having gained perspective on health care policy as an undergraduate, I wanted to better understand how managers would approach solving health care problems. At Harvard Business School, I began to work with Professor Michael Porter and am writing several case studies on domestic and global health care strategy.

This fall, I return to Harvard Medical School as a fourth year student and will apply to residency programs. My experience as a government concentrator at Harvard honed my analytic thinking and writing skills and has been invaluable in career. I aspire to use my training in government, clinical medicine, and management to improve access to quality health care in the United States and abroad.

Dan Budnitz, '93: "I am not sure if a career in medicine or public policy is for me". This was a line from my college application to Harvard in 1989. My undergraduate degree in Government, later combined with a medical degree and a masters of public health, has enabled me to do both.

After completing an internal medicine residency, I joined the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS), commonly called the “disease detectives” of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Almost immediately, I had the opportunity to work at the interface of government and medicine through emergency public health responses and long-range health policy development.

In my two years as an EIS Officer, I participated in public health responses to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003, and to several hurricanes. After EIS, I remained at CDC with an appointment with the US Public Health Service and have worked on national health policy issues including monitoring medication safety, drug poisonings in children, and standards for electronic health records. I also have been able to continue to practice medicine ½ day a week.

Throughout my career, the knowledge and the critical thinking and writing skills which I gained from a government concentration have been invaluable. I likely would not have gained these with an undergraduate degree in biology or chemistry, and I certainly did not learn these skills in medical school or medical residency. I would highly recommend a government concentration to anyone who thinks their career path may include public health, health policy, or any aspect of medicine outside of direct patient care.

Mark Onaitis, '93: After graduation, I moved to Durham, North Carolina to start medical school at Duke University. After graduating in 1997, I completed both general surgery residency (finished June 2004) and cardiothoracic surgery fellowship (finished June 2007) at Duke. I am now Assistant Professor of Surgery at Duke with primary interest in Thoracic Oncology.

Hugh Silk, '91: While I am not using my government training formally, I feel I am using a lot of the skills that I acquired as a government major. When I left Harvard I taught social literature and then started a youth service program. From there I went to medical school and eventually became a family doctor. I teach medical students and residents now as well as practice full spectrum family medicine. I am in the process of getting an MPH which I believe I will use to work on community health projects to improve the care of children and disadvantaged.

Government helped me to learn to read and synthesize mass amounts of reading. It helped me to do research and to write more succinctly. It helped me learn how to learn in small groups and to defend ideas. These are skills I used in medical school.

However, what I think it did on a more profound level was teach me how to think with a more worldly view and with a critical eye for what is presented to me. The former I use every day as I take care of patients from different places. I have a curiosity for where they come from and for what is out there. How do people live in persecution and thrive and move and become healthy again? The latter, I use as a part of listening to people,

digging deeper into their history or into a study about health. Am I being told the truth; is there a truth?

I enjoy saying "government" every time I am in a group of physicians and we have to announce our undergrad majors. Within a sea of "bio", "chem" and "psych" it allows me to stand out. I think that the perspective I bring to health care stands out too.