

Alex Spencer to Pursue Medical Degree

As a burly and intense Mark Morris basketball and football player, Alex Spencer was a brute in competition. After graduation in 2002, however, Alex showed a different side. He attended Concordia University and finished his degree in Molecular Biology. Alex continued his education in business school resulting in a Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Administration (MBA) also from Concordia University.

While a full-time student in business school Alex concurrently garnered a job at Oregon Health Sciences University, continuing a passion for research initiated while an undergraduate. He has been working as a researcher in the Hematology Division for 3 years, where scientists attempt to find causes and cures for blood disorders like anemia, leukemia, and bleeding problems. He has worked within the same laboratories and with the same equipment, used by Dr. Brian Druker, who discovered the power of a small molecule now called Gleevec, which has revolutionized the treatment of chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) and other cancers.

Finally, all this experience has congealed into a plan—to become a doctor. So, Alex spends every Wednesday here in Longview seeing patients with Dr. Kirkpatrick and PAs Matt Pynch and Dave Kirkpatrick, learning how health care providers listen, examine, diagnose and treat patients with hundreds of different ailments, each with nuances of the patient's life situation.

Alex has a quick and curious mind, and sees not only the implications of office visits for individual patients, but also the bigger picture of the “business” environment in which external forces like government, insurance companies, and advertising all challenge the traditional “Doctor-Patient” relationship.

Alex also brings a nice mix of city and rural thinking, to the office. Having grown up in Toutle, he can relate well to the challenges inherent in “country folks” managing their illnesses. After 8 years of living in the City, he also understands the urban perspective.