

## Why I Chose a BS/MD Program

by Jayson R. Baman, M.D.



Since I was a young child, I had a dream of becoming a physician. The prospect of helping people while also contributing to the greater body of scientific and medical knowledge was really appealing to me.

The traditional route to medical school involves obtaining a bachelor's degree and then applying to medical school. My concern about gaining admission to medical school, even when I was in high school, led me to consider BS/MD programs. Though highly competitive, these combined programs offer acceptance to both undergraduate college and medical school and thus relieve the pressure of having to apply to medical school after you are in college.

The features of BS/MD programs vary considerably. Some programs are accelerated—six or seven years in total—while others are full eight-year programs. The undergraduate GPA and/or MCAT requirements also differ from program to program, and some programs have restrictions on your choice of undergraduate field of study.

I enrolled in the eight-year combined BS/MD program at the University of Rochester (Rochester Early Medical Scholars, or REMS). The program guarantees admission to the University of Rochester School of Medicine upon completion of a four-year undergraduate degree and other minor requirements. I chose REMS over other BS/MD programs for several reasons. For one thing, I wanted to pursue an eight-year program that would not compromise the length of my college experience. Additionally, the program was incredibly flexible, allowing me to choose my major field of study without

limitation. With this flexibility, I was able to complete a bachelor's degree in molecular genetics with a minor in economics. Additionally, because the REMS program exempts students from the MCAT exam, I had time to spend a semester abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where I took a course load instructed entirely in Spanish.

When faced with the decision of choosing a combined BS/MD program versus pursuing a traditional undergraduate education, I elected to take the “safe” route—one that guaranteed me admission to medical school. Having this guarantee relieved a lot of pressure during college and allowed me to pursue a college career that focused on my interests, rather than being centered around building a competitive application for admission to medical school.

Because I stayed committed to the medical path, I am very happy with my decision and I would make the same one again. For students who are not firmly committed to medicine, however, pursuing a traditional college experience may actually be a better choice, since those institutions could open more doors in non-medical fields such as engineering, business, law, etc.

Although my college experience was defined by having the guarantee of medical school, I made sure to keep up with my traditional pre-med peers by taking a rigorous course load that would prepare me for medical school. Once in med school, I was treated like any other medical student—we were all on equal ground. In addition, being familiar with the University of Rochester system and the surrounding area eased my transition to the challenging course load that exists at all medical schools. And because I stayed in the same town as my undergraduate college, I maintained close relationships with my college friends. This was a welcome escape during the stressful times of medical school.

In all, I am extremely happy with my choice of the REMS program. I was named to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society during medical school and was matched with my top choice of Northwestern University for my residency in internal medicine. From both professional and personal perspectives, the University of Rochester treated me really well, and I can proudly say that it was eight years well spent. ■



**Jayson Baman** grew up in Norristown, PA. He is currently doing his residency in internal medicine and hopes to pursue cardiology training thereafter. When he is not studying, Jayson enjoys spending time with his fiancée and family. He loves trying new food and drink, and he is an avid baseball fan.

### Learn more:

- *The Official Guide to Medical School Admissions (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2017)*
- [students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/medical-schools-offering-combined-undergraduatemd-](http://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/medical-schools-offering-combined-undergraduatemd-)