

"My most meaningful patient interaction of third year was on my surgical oncology rotation. We had a young man admitted into the hospital with undifferentiated abdominal pain and after getting an extensive work up, he ended up being admitted to our team. Being a cancer service, I could tell he was extremely anxious while we continued to work through the source of his pain, so at the end of the day I went back to provide him company. We eventually started laughing as we talked about the failures of the past 30 years of the Washington Football Team. I couldn't answer many of his concerns about his upcoming surgery, but I was able to promise him that I have the privilege of waking him up at the crack of dawn every morning to check in on him. He laughed at that too. There was only one procedure left to confirm what all other tests were pointing us towards: Cholangiocarcinoma. It was a big word with an even heavier prognosis. For someone so young to be getting such a difficult diagnosis... It was heart wrenching. I checked in with him continuously to see how he was doing and would try my best to make his day a little better. Even though I felt helpless to his situation, I knew he wouldn't want to be alone.

I have recently been reexposed to the quote "**to cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always.**"

It hangs on the wall in Dr. Ferentz's family medicine office. Looking back on my surgical oncology experience I realized it was never my job to cure this man, or even relieve him from all of his pain and worries. However, I knew with certainty that I could provide a **source of support** and comfort for him as he coped with a new cancer diagnosis. This may be more obvious as a medical student because we are often still gaining the tools needed to relieve and cure patients. Yet, I think this man's poor prognosis in the hands of extremely talented physicians taught me something important. Even with completed training, we often still fall short of the goal of curing, but we can always be there to comfort our patients."

- Darby Moore

