

I was raised in a safe, suburban neighborhood and attended strong public schools. But then, our family's financial security fell with the dot-com crash. This meant that my parents no longer could afford health insurance. One day, after a trip to the nearby Urgent Care clinic and an aberrant EKG, my mom was asked to walk into the Emergency Department. That one visit produced medical debt that took a decade to pay off.

I've wanted to become a surgeon since I was 6 years old. We did not have any doctors in my family. Instead, my inspiration came from my cousin who was studying for her Occupational Therapy Boards and showed me her anatomy books. My parents shielded the financial struggles from me so I could pursue my dream. Nevertheless, our situation raised my awareness and empathy for those who face adversity.

My first step into the world of advocacy was through Mobilizing Health, a nonprofit I started in college to connect rural patients in India to their local physicians through community leaders and text messages. I did not realize it at the time, but running an organization, raising \$160,000, managing full-time staff and 40 village representatives abroad, and serving 5,300 patients helped me cut my teeth as a leader and advocate. After running Mobilizing Health full-time for two years and overseeing its integration into UNICEF, I enrolled at UCLA School of Medicine.

When the ACA passed, my parents finally had health insurance again, 14 years later. I saw firsthand how impactful it is to suddenly have access to good, affordable health care. I believe that every person deserves that access, and will spend my entire career advocating and fighting for those who do not. This is what advocacy in health care can do—not just for one family, but for thousands. In the future, I will work to bridge the disconnect between policy, patients, and surgical practice. As first step, I plan to spend my research year in Washington, D.C. where I hope to learn more about and advance health care policy.

Attending the ACS Leadership and Advocacy Summit is the perfect catalyst to accelerate my journey toward increasing access to quality, affordable health care in the U.S. I am excited to learn how to become an effective surgeon leader and become more involved with the ACS, and would be honored to engage with the leading surgeons who share my passions. This would truly be a life changing opportunity for me and I will make the most of it.