

Interview Assessment #2:

Name of Professional: Dr. Nyaz Didehbani, Ph.D.

Profession: Neuropsychiatrist specializing in concussions and traumatic brain injury

Company Name: UT Southwestern Medical Center in Frisco

Date of Interview: October 19, 2020

My second interview was with Dr. Nyaz Didehbani, a neuropsychologist at the UT Southwestern Medical Center in Frisco. It was such an incredible experience to learn from her insights as she discussed her path to pursuing neuropsychology and her most valuable piece of advice for future researchers.

First, Dr. Didehbani and I discussed the origins of her career as a neuropsychologist, which she did not initially expect to become. She told me that all her life, she wanted to pursue the pre-med route and become a pediatrician and even fully prepared for medical school by taking the pre-med requirements and the MCAT. However, after thoughtful introspection, she realized that she enjoyed her psychology courses in high school and college and decided to pursue a PhD in psychology instead. I can completely connect with her sentiment, as all my life, I have wanted to pursue a career in medicine and become a physician, but I constantly struggle with which path I want to take. Like Dr. Didehbani, I wanted to become a pediatrician when I was younger, but then switched my interests to OB/GYN my sophomore and junior year, and after further reflection, I am currently interested in neuropsychology research. Although some might find these constant fluctuations inconsistent, I believe they are incredibly rewarding, as I am constantly gaining new perspectives and experiences from various fields of medicine. Now, I have not only interacted with patients first-hand, witnessed clinical rounds, and assessed major

surgeries in the field of OB/GYN, I have also broadened my insights into understanding the field of medical academia and research. Dr. Didehbani assured me that regardless of what path I chose, that there was always room for improvisation and changing mindsets, as individuals are constantly growing and shaping their decisions. The preconception is that students must make decisions for the entire rest of their lives and careers at just seventeen, when the frontal lobe isn't even fully formed until the age of twenty-five, so I was comforted by the fact that dynamic learning, growth, and essential decisions continue to be made all throughout a physician's life.

Another crucial topic of discussion we discussed is the lack of diversity within the field of neuropsychology. Despite nationwide calls for greater representation of BIPOC and other minority individuals within all fields of the American workforce, it remains true that neuropsychologists may not adequately represent their constituents. She informed me that although neuropsychologists can sympathize with and understand the perspectives of their minority patients by unlearning personal prejudices and actively being aware of other communities' experiences, there is no possible way for neuropsychologists to fully understand and comprehend what it means to live life as a minority individual unless they themselves are a member of that minority. We bonded over our experiences as Asian women and how our unique identities allowed some patients to feel more welcomed within the clinic as they can be assured that we share similar circumstances and background that connects to them on a deeper level. As I continue my research, I will further consider the narratives of other individuals and how their different perspectives and insights may lead to bias within their choices. This is similar to a question I brought up in my research assessment, which asked whether or not patients within my study using a dot-probe test with human faces would pay more attention to a face based on the patient's individual value of attractiveness or another underlying bias. It also begs the question if a patients' bias towards a specific physician based on their ethnicity or background is a form of

discrimination or a form of patient privilege, as they seek to have their concerns properly represented and understood by an empathetic member of their demographic.