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As I further my education, I aspire to become a physician. Although I have varying interests, my favorite specialties include obstetrics, neonatology, and cardiology. As a 2020 Award Recipient, I was afforded two unique experiences. The first occurred during the summer of 2020 when I participated in a virtual learning experience hosted by the First Coast Black Nurses Association. For six consecutive weeks, a different medical professional shared 'a day in the life of' their medical profession. This series was enlightening in that it expanded my knowledge in terms of how various specialties are interrelated. I completed my internship experience during the summer of 2021 when I was paired with Dr. Josie McCloud who practices medicine in a Transitional Care and Primary Care clinic. While shadowing Dr. McCloud I was able to ask questions about the process of becoming a doctor, engage with patients, and learn about various illnesses and treatments. Dr. McCloud was extremely helpful and welcoming throughout my time there. My experiences with minority physicians are limited, so shadowing Dr. McCloud and getting to interact with other Black healthcare professionals inspired me in the sense of knowing that achieving my dreams are within reach.

As I shadowed Dr. McCloud, I was able to observe her interactions with patients, see different cases, learn about patient management and how patients are treated for various illnesses. I was able to learn about a plethora of health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (diseases that I learned a great deal about during last summer's virtual experience). The most important thing that I learned is that a physician doesn't just treat the symptoms that a patient presents rather, identifies the root cause of the illness so that the patient can have an improved quality of life. Additionally, I learned how preexisting illnesses, lifestyle habits, mental health, and cultural factors can exacerbate health issues in an individual. I was able to observe physical examinations and procedures such as joint injections, venipunctures, pap smears and breathing treatments. Lastly, my knowledge on medications was enhanced; I learned how medications are prescribed and combined, and that health conditions, allergies and other factors affect which medications a patient is allowed to take.

Overall, the AnnieRuth Foundation has afforded me an invaluable opportunity. Participating in the summer internship program definitely allowed me to gain knowledge and experience in the healthcare field. Furthermore, this program helped me to develop important career and life skills such as resume building and networking skills. Lastly, shadowing through this program helped to solidify my decision to go into medicine and has helped me get one step closer to accomplishing my goals.