


# Physicians Bulletin

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## Connecting to Care

Stories of  
Perseverance  
and Hope



**National Grant to  
Help MOMS**  
Create Connections  
and Combat Burnout

**He Said 'Yes' and  
Found His Place—**  
Nebraska's Chief  
Medical Officer

**Performing Under Pressure:**  
A Cultural Look at Burnout





## Service on Two Fronts


**HAD ALWAYS KNOWN** I would end up as a family medicine physician. Even after my undergraduate education when I was a plant pathologist (and after another institution came up with a better solution to my clinical question making my working research obsolete overnight), I knew I wanted to attend medical school and play an active role in people's wellbeing, for what pleasure can compare with bringing hope and joy to the human heart – and after spending so much time healing plants, it's a natural progression. I appreciate that everybody has their part to play. As healers, we have the honor of being able to directly influence general welfare, which is an awe-inspiring place to be in life. It's been a vacillating road at times, but it seems my journey brought me right where I need to be.

Born the son of political refugees, I had been instilled with an early appreciation of social justice and the "American Dream." My parents fled Iran after many friends and family members were killed for being a religious minority during the Islamic Revolution. It took months of treacherous travel to Pakistan, then flying to Austria after being assigned refugee status with the United Nations. But eventually, they were granted political asylum in the United States. I was born in California, and this nation is all I've ever known, but I was reminded of the struggles endured to grant this freedom – and more importantly, the government's support of justice making it worth the sacrifice. My parents knew it wasn't perfect, but that it was important to contribute and work hard to expand the reach of justice to those who needed it the most.

I decided the best way to repay the country I loved for all it had provided us was to serve in the Armed Forces. I was single at the time, and felt that 'worst case scenario: I can see the world with the Air Force. My parents supported my decisions the whole way. It may have been because I found old pictures of them in their days in Iran's Military (where obligatory service was mandated) and pointed out the hypocrisy if they hadn't. I commissioned

while attending the University of Wisconsin for medical school, and outside of Commissioned Officer Training for a month and a few months of interview rotations at various bases, I continued my life as a medical student. I knew that after graduating, I would have to pay back four years of service, but, in the interim, I had the opportunity to work at Epic Systems in Wisconsin (I know you probably love it as much as I do, but that's for another piece), before eventually finding my way into the Family Medicine Residency at Offutt Air Force Base on active duty.

Our program is intertwined with the UNMC Family Medicine Residency, and outside of military obligations, shaving, having to get rid of my curly hair, and having clinic on base, the residents are nearly indistinguishable. Military residents work alongside our peers at UNMC, Methodist, Children's, and wherever else our electives take us, and we give our civilian counterparts opportunities to join us on base for lectures, outpatient rotations, and to work with our phenomenal faculty. As a military resident, I also have access to unique opportunities. For instance, I am participating in a Medical Acupuncture Course, with a DoD-wide initiative to 'think acupuncture first' in order to reduce opioid abuse within our patient population – with impressive results.

Admittedly, when first joining, the idea of graduating medical school with little debt, possibly retiring in 20 years, and adding another layer to my service of humanity (both a physician and an active duty member of our uniformed services?!), but I have quickly learned that there is an internal struggle with this dichotomy. Finding my place within the community in which I am merely 'stationed,' away from family and old friends, and the uncertainty of another PCS or possible deployment only a few years away weigh heavily on my mind. Still, I continue to lace up my boots, caring for patients while striving to play my role in unfolding our aspiration of "liberty and justice for all." 



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