



Visiting the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., the inscription “Freedom Is Not Free” left a profound mark on me. Less than a hundred years ago, the Korean peninsula was war-torn, wrestling between life and death with freedom at stake. So much blood shed, sacrifices, and toil in the last decades have built the ground I am able to stand on as a Korean-American, free and daring to dream.

Thank you for supporting my dreams through the SNUCMAA-NA Il Young Kim, MD Scholarship. This scholarship helped relieve the financial expenses of being a medical student, which I am truly grateful for.

During my first year at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine, I had the privilege of exploring human anatomy through cadavers, learning about pathophysiology through various patient cases, and correlating knowledge with cutting-edge research by analyzing scientific papers. I have come to appreciate the complexity of the human body and how every system – from the cardiovascular system to the endocrine system – works in harmony to maintain balance. It was particularly valuable to learn about processes at the molecular level from gene expression to protein activity and signaling cascades. These molecular processes explained how seemingly unrelated symptoms manifested in a single pathology and provided insight into how therapeutics can target these pathways. This also inspired me to take a biomedical engineering course on drug delivery systems. I learned about and designed various drug delivery mechanisms from floating osmotic pumps to transdermal patches to improve bioavailability of different therapeutics. I was thankful for the opportunity to not only learn about human physiology and pathology, but to also delve into potential innovative solutions to address medical gaps in treatment and diagnosis.

I’m excited to continue growing as a physician-innovator – someone who not only provides exceptional patient care, but also improves healthcare and health systems through innovation. The SNUCMAA-NA scholarship has been so valuable and I am really grateful to have the support of Korean-American physician leaders of today in pursuing my dreams. One day, I hope to also give back and inspire the next generation of aspiring physicians.