

Overcoming a learning disability will make physician-in-training a better doctor

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Overcoming a learning disability to become a physician will actually help in being compassionate toward patients, writes a medical student of his struggle with a severe reading disability in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Daniel Heffner, a medical student at the University of British Columbia who will graduate in 2013, has struggled with a severe [reading disability](#) that caused laborious reading and poor marks in school until he was diagnosed at age 12. His diagnosis allowed him to realize he could succeed, and he applied himself to overcoming his disability. He triumphed, being admitted to university for science and later, pharmacy and medical school.

"Now as a medical student, I look at things differently," writes Heffner. "When I see the new challenges and struggles my patients face in tackling their new diagnoses, addictions and disabilities, I'm reminded of my personal struggle in tackling my disability. I feel the frustration they feel when their health care goals and challenges are not properly understood by those who care for them, just as my disability was at times not understood by those in charge of my education."

Although Heffner still struggles at learning in a fast-paced environment, his determination keeps him focused.

"What once seemed like such a burden now serves as my greatest asset in being compassionate toward my patients. It makes me human."

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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