

# Nicolas Garza

What motivated you to pursue medicine?

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My brother, he's a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and my dad. He's a Vietnam veteran. He was trained to be a radiology technologist and he ended up training radiology techs for about 40 years, my mom was a scenographer. And ended up teaching vascular scenography for several years. It was just something I grew up with some of my earliest memories, were going to work with my dad and playing in the radiology lab going into the darkroom, and watching him develop X rays on old film. So, I mean, it's something I've always been around and just was pretty familiar to me.

Tell us about your music career before attending medical school.

00:48

You know, shortly after I got out of high school, you know, I growing up in Austin, I used to love going to see live music. Pretty much every single weekend, I would be staying out late and going to see bands play. And that was something I wanted to do. And so after I graduated high school, I pursued music, I was in a band, and we traveled across the country in a van for about seven years. And some other things I did in music, I was electronics technician, I manufactured guitar effects pedals and repaired old tube amplifiers, and also had a couple businesses, but really, my music career kind of led me to meeting my wife. And the transition to medicine kind of happen somewhat after that, you know, my wife had a five year old daughter at the time. And, you know, as, after we got married, I wanted to be a good role model and go back to school and show her how, you know, important education was and, you know, so, pretty much right after I started school, you know, I knew I wanted to be a doctor, and I just love learning how everything worked. And, you know, I just thought it would be a really rewarding career for me.

Why did you choose Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine?

02:16

I interviewed at a few schools and Texas Tech, for us, my wife, at the time, she had grown up coming to West Texas visiting her aunt and uncle when they would go, they used to live in a town called Shallowater. And she just really enjoyed her time there and she thought West Texas would be a good place for your family. And, you know, when I was interviewing with Texas Tech, you know, it really seemed like they wanted to know more about me.

What specialty are you pursuing?

02:52

You know, one thing I realized pretty early on is that I really enjoy working with kids. You know, I love my pediatrics rotation and so an ultimate, you know, my career goal would be to be a pediatric radiologist, you know, I feel like I would be able to help the most amount of people in that way and then still be able to have some interaction with patients and families and which is pretty important to me.

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Where are you hoping to match?

03:26

My top pick is going to be the Dell Austin, they have a new radiology program there. And you know, it's going to be close to home. And I'll feel like I have a lot of support from my family there. And, you know, it's, it's familiar to me and I grew up there. You know, some of my other really highly ranked choices were Oklahoma City, a program called Integris. And then also UT Southwestern, you know, there were programs where I just felt like I would be really well supported considering being a single father.

What is it like to be a single dad going through medical school?

04:09

So being a single dad in medical school, you know, I there's lots of challenges with being a medical student, you know, just in general, you know, there's lots of demands on your time, you don't really have a whole lot of control over your schedule. And being a single dad, you know, I have another person to take care of, in, she has her own needs, she's school age, so, you know, making sure she's ready for school and, you know, she has everything that she needs, you know, while you know, trying to take care of my studies and things like that, you know, there were several times where I would have a final exam the next day, but in the middle of the night, I was taking my daughter to the emergency room because there's just something wrong or you know, and then we would take care the problem and I go to school and take the test the next day, it's, you know, probably one of the hardest things is just finding time to study and finding help.

Can you tell us about your wife and how you were able to continue through medical school after she passed away?

05:20

In January of 2016, I was in my last semester at UT Austin, my wife started having some symptoms that were concerning. And so we went to the doctor. And, you know, about a few days later, she was diagnosed with stage two, B, endocervical cancer. And, you know, over the next two and a half, three years, we were going through treatments in, you know, just countless doctor's appointments, you know, just trying to get her better. And all the while, you know, I finished school, and, you know, trying to get into medical school was something that, you know, we had worked really hard for as a family. And she wanted me to continue my pursuit of becoming a physician. And so I was still working on, you know, taking the MCAT in studying for that, and, you know, just trying to become a more competitive applicant. And so, the 2017 application cycle, you know, I interviewed at Texas Tech, it was my very first interview I had here you know, and I got in, I believe, in that November, December, or September of that year, and my wife really wanted to come here, she, despite, you know, her health problems, and her being diagnosed as terminal. She, she wanted to come up here, and, you know, she was able to see me, you know, do my white coat ceremony. But, you know, sadly, about two months later, she passed away. And, you know, it shortly after that, I had a meeting with Dr. Berk, and kind of talked about my plans for the future, because it was kind of a good time for me to either step, step out, or just figure out something else. And I felt like, the best thing to do is just to continue on, and you know, and the school was very supportive of my decision, and were willing to do everything to help me out and, and get me through school.

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How did the pandemic affect your time in medical school?

07:44

I guess around March, at the beginning of the pandemic, you know, we were switched to online or virtual learning. And, but also, at the same time, my daughter was switched to virtual learning. And, you know, this was kind of new to everybody. And so there wasn't really a good curriculum set in stone, you know, for, you know, kindergarten, and, so trying to keep my daughter engaged with her activities during the day was pretty challenging. And I was also trying to finish up second year. And also something that we have to do with in the second year is take step one, which is a three part series of our board exams. And so just trying to manage all those things was pretty challenging. And, and it did affect, you know, some of my scores, which could have affected, you know, where I interviewed and things like that.

How does your family feel about your match day?

08:41

Well, I, you know, I think they're, they're pretty proud of me, and, you know, they're pretty excited to have two children that have become physicians.

How do you feel about yourself after making it to this point?

08:52

Just the fact that I got through medical school is, you know, it's very, I don't know what the word is. It's been so hard, you know, it really has been challenging for me, and I'm very proud of myself for getting to this point and, you know, wherever I match, you know, I'm just grateful that I am going to have a job.

What drove you to be so resilient throughout your journey?

09:21

So, you know, resilience for me, I didn't realize, you know, the potential I had for it, but, you know, I felt kind of the best way to honor my wife was to just continue going on and being open and honest about my situation in whatever class I was in or whatever rotation I was in that way, you know, it was helpful for me, you know, talking about it, but also my teachers and faculty were aware of my family situation so that things could be adjusted if they needed to. But, you know, having a child you know, You do everything for them once you're a parent and you know just trying to do everything you can to guarantee their success and I think that's probably one of the biggest things that kept me going was my daughter.