

Dr. Yahya Mohammed

July 27, 2016

Dear Members of the Admissions Committee,

I am a recent graduate from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and I am writing to you in support of Dr. Jeffrey Datto in his application to your medical school.

I have known Jeff for four years, beginning in the Fall 2012 semester when I started working in the lab of Dr. Damien Pearse at the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis with Jeff. Jeff is hard-working, compassionate, knowledgeable, and has been a great guide for students of all ages, whether it is undergraduate and medical students who come to work in the lab, or elementary and middle school children who come to learn about neuroscience at the annual Miami Brain Fair.

However, something I want to highlight about Jeff, which is even more impressive than his research and teaching of his students, is his involvement in the community in trying to help those suffering from mood disorders, specifically anxiety and depression.

Having understood something about the devastation that depression can have on a person, Jeff started a local community support group to assist residents with mood disorders going through hard times. He noticed that there was a need for patients with depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder to be able to communicate and learn from each other, and surprisingly there were limited resources available in Miami Dade county for them to be able to do so. He decided he had an obligation to use his life experience to give back to the community and founded the Depression, Anxiety, and Bipolar Support Group. I know Jeff not only through being a former student of the Pearse lab, but also through his support group in my own time of difficulty.

I've been attending the group since the Fall of 2015, and have witnessed the benefits first hand both for myself and the other attendees. Jeff creates a very welcoming atmosphere for anyone to attend, and anyone, new or old, immediately feels at home. I have witnessed time and again, that the support group becomes a second family to many, and even the only family for many who have broken relationships due to their struggles. He has designed his support group to be unique among support groups I have witnessed as a medical student, as his philosophy is to encourage others to celebrate life, support each other's goals, and discuss topics freely with each other that outside the group, they would be afraid to talk about. I've personally seen people come alive when they become a part of the group and I'm very grateful to have met such a genuine person.

Additionally, during the last several months, Jeff took his dedication a step further by laying out the framework for a self-help book for those who struggle with depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder to share his philosophy of living productively with mood disorders. He invited me to work with him in this endeavor and I can attest to his sincere devotion to improving the lives of suffering individuals whether he knows them personally or not.

This past year, he was appointed to the planning committee for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Walk out of Darkness. There is a great need in our community for more resources to help those contemplating suicide, and this walk is essential to raising awareness regarding this issue. He and his wife have been working with the foundation to promote the walk to make it even more of a success this year. All of this speaks to Jeff's motivation to help others without expecting any reward, a quality that is essential for one to be an effective physician.

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I have the utmost respect for Jeff for not giving up on his dream to become a physician scientist. The attributes I have witnessed first-hand compel me to recommend his application to your school without reservation. I am convinced that Jeff will one day be a great physician who will impact those around him at your University and community in the same positive manner he has here for my life and many others.

I ask you to support Dr. Datto's dream of returning into the medical field. He would be an excellent doctor in any field that he chooses because this is his calling for all the right reasons. If you have any questions for me, please don't hesitate to contact me at YMohammed@med.miami.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yahya Mohammed', written in a cursive style.

Yahya Mohammed, MD
University of Miami School of Medicine Class of 2015