

For My Dad – WCI Scholarship 2019 2nd Place

Second place in the WCI Scholarship contest goes to Momina Mazhar, an MS4 at [George Washington University School of Medicine](#), who will be the first physician in her family. In this post, she writes about her “blue collar” dad, and the sacrifices he made for her. Second place in the 2019 WCI Scholarship Competition is good for \$21,330 cash, her choice of a [WCI Online Course](#), and a copy of [The White Coat Investor’s Financial Boot Camp](#) for each member of her class.



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Six days a week, my dad gets up at 6AM, eats a breakfast of bread and chai, and leaves for work before 7. He always returns with his little green cooler full of empty water bottles, sets it down, and jokingly says, “Could you please take care of my briefcase? I had a long day in the office.” He’s never worked in an office before. Since we’ve moved to the U.S. 20 years ago, my dad has worked at convenience stores, factories, restaurants, and wherever would help pay the bills. Currently, he is a full-time mailman and a part-time pizza delivery driver.

After setting down his “briefcase” my dad showers, eats a quick meal, and hurries off to the pizza shop. He doesn’t come

home to sleep until 11, or 12 if it's the weekend.

Sometimes I'll get to see him during one of his mid-day breaks on the weekends when I'm home. If I'm studying, he'll jokingly ask if I need help with my homework. "I have a doctorate, too. In Postology." (Dad jokes: a cross-cultural phenomenon). The truth is that he had to quit school midway to take care of my grandfather, who was dying of gastric carcinoma. Everyone back in Pakistan says that the good fortune that brought my family to America is because of the blessings my grandfather gave to my dad when he was up all day and all night at his bedside.



Momina Mazhar, 2nd
place winner!

This good fortune allowed me to attend college on a full academic scholarship, study medicine in the nation's capital, research at some of the most prestigious institutes in the world, be one of the first women in my family to work, and one day be the very first physician. But every single day I think about the man who never let me or my three younger siblings feel deprived of anything and who always told us that he would be there to provide us whatever we needed so that we wouldn't have to work and get distracted from our education.

I think about what would have happened had I pursued a shorter career path, such as engineering or computer science. I could already be working, like all my friends in these fields, and

be able to provide at least a little bit to my family so that my dad would have to work less. But this was not the dream I had for myself ever since I was old enough to understand what it meant to be a physician.

In the humid summer, when the temperature gets above 100 degrees, I worry about my dad. In the harsh winter, when the temperature is so low, it hurts your teeth, I worry about my dad. Even now as I took a break from writing this essay, I received a news notification about a postal employee who was found dead on the job from heat exhaustion. Lately, I've also been worrying about his safety when he's out at night delivering pizzas, hoping someone will tip him well.

One late Sunday night during my internal medicine rotation, I returned to my apartment from a trip home and got a call from my mom. She sounded frantic, "Baba is in the hospital." My dad was at work making a delivery and was told to come around to the back of a house, where a group of men attacked him. They knocked him to the ground, kicked and punched him, took his phone, his wallet, and his keys and left him there. A few neighbors heard the commotion and called 911. When I heard this, I lost it. The thought of my frail, gray-bearded dad being so brutally attacked broke my heart. I ran to my car and rushed to the hospital to see him bruised and broken. I spent all night worrying about what this would do to him. Would he develop acute stress disorder, PTSD? Could he go back and work the same job again?



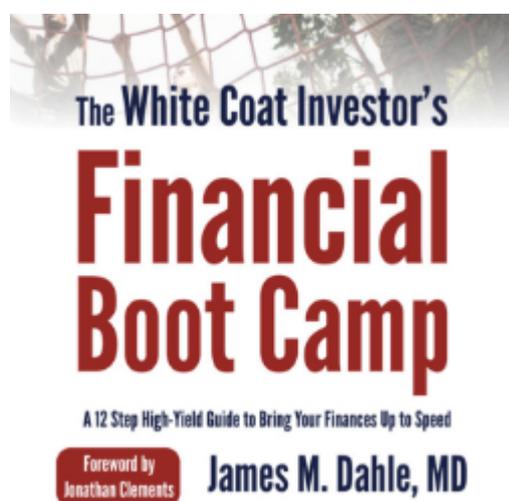
I felt guilty for thinking the latter, but I had to because without this job, my family would not survive. My father's income not only supports my three younger siblings and my mom, but it supports his sisters in Pakistan from time to time. When they are going through a rough patch and can't afford food or when they are being abused by their in-laws, my dad is always there to help. The selflessness, love, and compassion my dad has shown to his family throughout his entire life is rare. He is tired, but he never complains. He is worried, but he always smiles and jokes.

He has showed strength through every single hardship. When the business he had such high hopes for and invested so much money into failed, causing him to almost go bankrupt, when his oldest sister's entire house burned down in Pakistan and he had to work extra hard to support her, or when his mother passed away and he couldn't afford a plane ticket to attend her funeral. The love he has for the people in his life is immeasurable. Could I have gotten this far without it? Absolutely not.

Sometimes the guilt of seeing him toil away in the heat and in the cold, knowing that I could have helped in some way or another had I chosen a shorter career path, is washed away when I see the happiness that my accomplishments bring him. He has wanted this for me more than anyone else. He proudly tells everyone he knows that his daughter is going to be a

doctor, despite trying so hard to keep himself from bragging about me. He is just one of those dads.

Even when I decided to take a gap year to do research, my dad supported me all the way, despite there being a chance I wouldn't be getting paid the entire year and may have to rely on him a little bit. My dad was ecstatic when I told him I was going to get paid part-time. Knowing that I am now living paycheck to paycheck on my small salary, he asks me every single week if I need help with groceries or bills. Sometimes he sneaks money into my wallet and I don't find out until I've left home. His generosity knows no limits.



Scholarship money will not help me repay my dad for everything he has done for my family and me. It won't be the reason my dad quits his part-time job. But in a few years from now, when I'm a physician, it will help me get on my feet faster so I can relieve some of the financial strain on my family. I could help my siblings pay for college, help my aunties in Pakistan, and take responsibility for some of the bills. I could tell my dad, "Enough is enough. You've done more than anyone I know. It's time to take a break."