

## **Show vs. Tell: Writing Your College Application Essay** **MIT Example\***

### **SHOW:**

He held up the sheet of wrinkled paper, his eyes in silent protest.

The tattered bill requested 13,800 dollars for a three-day hospital stay.

"Why call the ambulance? Just leave me alone!" the frail old man muttered. Just a week ago, Mr. Vu suffered a stroke that required hospitalization. Because he could not understand English, Mr. Vu had not applied for health insurance, resulting in the exorbitant bill.

An internship at an Asian clinic opened my eyes to the untold story of limited-English proficiency patients, who often struggle to obtain health care in a maze of foreign forms and convoluted policies.

Suffering from a worsening stomachache, Mrs. Wong was neglected in the county hospital for over two hours, unable to flag down a passing nurse for assistance because of the language barrier. Clutching a X-Ray order, Mr. Park searched in vain for Radiology in a blinding flurry of English letters.

Over the summer, these stories became too common - accounts of immigrants fighting for their right to care in a shockingly monolingual health system. After the internship, I participated in a medical interpretation training program and was licensed as a Mandarin health interpreter in November. I wanted to change the status quo.

My experiences this summer solidified my conviction of entering into public health, especially immigrant health, as my future course of study. America has long prided itself as a "melting pot"

of cultures. Isn't it only fitting that there exists equitable access to health care, regardless of the language spoken?

### **TELL:**

Last summer, I worked in an Asian clinic in Oakland, California. Over the course of the summer, I realized the plight of immigrants when it comes to obtaining equitable health care. In the modern health industry, immigrants and other residents who possess limited English proficiency are often overlooked because of their inability to communicate their symptoms to the doctor and complete paperwork in English. This problem is exacerbated when they cannot apply for health insurance, resulting in exorbitant health bills. In a country that claims to be the "melting pot" of cultures, this kind of neglect is no longer acceptable.

Many patients suffer extended waits in the hospital, unable to obtain assistance. It is possible that a worsening stomachache is the initial sign for appendicitis, which needs to be treated expeditiously. Often, hospital signs are also not translated into other languages, making navigation difficult for elderly patients. These scenes are played across hospitals in the nation everyday.

After my experiences this summer, I realized that I wanted to channel my energy into the revitalization of this system. It is no longer sufficient for us to stand on the sidelines and watch. To this end, I participated in a medical interpretation training program and was licensed as a Mandarin health interpreter. I hope I will be able to contribute my efforts to the field of public health, especially immigrant health, in the future. These patients cannot afford to passively wait for language-accessible care and continue to sacrifice their right to treatment.

\* [http://www.mitadmissions.org/topics/apply/the\\_freshman\\_application/show\\_dont\\_tell\\_the\\_college\\_ess.shtml](http://www.mitadmissions.org/topics/apply/the_freshman_application/show_dont_tell_the_college_ess.shtml)