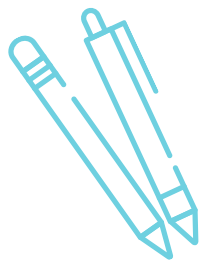


REFLECTING AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

# PENN PBS NEWSLETTER

## MCAT Question of the Month:

CHECK THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 2 FOR THE ANSWER!



If the goal of health communication is to have influence on individuals, families, neighborhoods, medical and social service organizations, and ultimately public health policy, they are adhering to:

- A. Ecological Theory
- B. Family Systems Theory
- C. John Bowlby's Attachment Theory
- D. Milton Gordon's Assimilation Theory

## Giving Thanks & Giving Back

We volunteered at **MANNA** to help prep hoagies and Thanksgiving meals! We'll be volunteering again as a group at the start of the Spring semester, stay tuned!



## Mighty Writers Holiday Gift Bags

During the end of the year, we put together 50 holiday gift bags for children of low-income families in Philadelphia. They were distributed through Mighty Writers, a local nonprofit that provides free online writing classes and tutoring for students K-12. We included crafting supplies and yummy treats! A big and warm thank you to students that contributed!



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EMAIL:  
UPENNPBS@GMAIL.COM

INSTAGRAM:  
@UPENNPOSTBACSOCIETY

# Student Spotlight: Peter Maisano

## Tell us about your background and how you ended up in Penn's Postbac program.

I completed undergrad at Penn this past May with degrees in Sociology and Italian. From the minute I stepped on campus as a freshman, I fell in love with Philly and Penn's campus. Although the academics were rigorous, Penn does a great job ensuring there are plenty of resources available to students to succeed. I'm a triplet, and my siblings and I went to school together for K-12, so Penn was the first place I had the opportunity to explore my own, singular identity and find things I enjoyed doing. I had the chance to study abroad in Rome, get involved in the Alumni Relations office, and volunteer to tutor English through a refugee program. I've found the best experiences I've had at Penn are ones I've been most passionate about. I decided to stay at Penn for a variety of reasons. For one, I think Penn's academics are second to none. The faculty and staff we interact with daily are testament to how much the postbac program and Penn care about our success in the program and as we continue on to professional school. My senior year I took the LPS section of Gen Chem and was able to interact with many Core Studies students already in the program. While the class itself was difficult, the sense of camaraderie I experienced between the students made me feel much more capable to succeed in the class. It was because of this experience that I chose to stay at Penn.

## Why did you choose dentistry?

I've been all over the map career-wise. I entered college thinking I wanted to study architecture, then business, and ultimately law. After completing a few internships in real estate investment and law, I realized I don't have the type of personality to sit behind a desk reading all day. My semester abroad in Rome opened my eyes to the fact that I love interacting with new people in meaningful ways. Because Penn's undergrad curriculum requires students to take classes in the sciences, I knew I enjoyed science classes and began to explore health-related careers. What led me to choose dentistry was the fact that dentists have meaningful interactions with patients to solve a variety of issues they are facing. What I think makes dentistry different from medicine is that issues patients are facing often have curative solutions, and this along with the ability to actually use my hands and critical thinking skills to perform these curative procedures is why I've chosen this path. Another important aspect of dentistry which has really become paramount to the profession is the link between systemic health and oral health. As a future dental professional I take to heart that my role will be more than procedural-based, but also ensuring patients understand the importance and connection between their oral health and general health.

## Tell us about your time in the program. Have you been able to get involved and how was the adjustment?

Because COVID has canceled most in person interactions, I've been trying to find ways to stay involved in the Penn community through virtual opportunities. I've joined journal club, I am looking forward to getting more involved in the new student organization ASJM, and I still virtually tutor a refugee in Turkey who is trying to learn English.

This spring I will also be starting a research position at Penn Dental Medicine in the Department of Oral Medicine. Because I had the opportunity to take some science courses during my undergrad at Penn, I think my transition into the postbac program has been relatively smooth. It's been hard to get used to not having a mix of natural science courses and social science/liberal arts courses, which would offer a nice balance between studying for exams, doing problem sets, and writing papers.

However, I think it takes time to get used to. Looking ahead, I will be applying to dental school this upcoming cycle (beginning May 2021), so this Spring semester I will be studying for the DAT, taking classes, and getting other pieces of my application organized.

## Is there anything specific within the dental track that you're most looking forward to?

I'm excited for the opportunity to learn and perform dental procedures myself. It's always interesting to observe a dentist during shadowing experiences, but it's a completely different story to be able to actually use dental instruments and treat a patient directly. Even if dental school is still a few years away, it keeps me motivated to study hard and make the most out of all the opportunities Penn has given me thus far.

## General Advice for students:

As an undergrad, I always felt overwhelmed by the many research, volunteer, and social opportunities that Penn offers, but what I've learned is it's ok to start small and focus on a few activities that you truly care about. One thing I've heard a lot from friends and mentors who have applied to professional school is "quality over quantity", and I really think that speaks to the fact that admission committees want to see what you're passionate about, not that you can join every possible club under the sun. If it takes time to find out what you're passionate about during your time in the postbac program, stay positive and keep an open mind because eventually you'll find exactly what fits you best.

## COVID related experience:

I think I would be remiss to not mention how much COVID has changed my postbac experience and academic plans. I think it's easy to feel disconnected from the program and other students because we are located around the globe during these challenging times. I know in many instances dental-related research and shadowing opportunities have been halted because of CDC regulations and guidelines, so it's easy to be discouraged by everything we're not able to do this semester. What has been really helping me stay positive is talking to my advisors, professors, and other students regularly to make the most of virtual opportunities available to us.



# COVID-19 Vaccine: Myth or Fact?



The COVID-19 vaccine can make you sick with COVID-19.

## MYTH.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines being administered or those in development in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that the COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccine will cause you to test positive on a viral test.

## MYTH.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines can cause a positive result on viral tests, which are used to see if you have a current infection.

I have recovered from COVID-19, but I still need to be vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

## FACT.

Due to severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and that re-infection with COVID-19 is possible, you should get the vaccine whether or not you have previously had COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccine can alter my DNA.

## MYTH.

COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The mRNA from a COVID-19 vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is located.

Information for this section is provided by the CDC website, an excellent source to read and learn more!

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

## Vaccinating Healthcare Heroes



"I opted to get the vaccine because I trust the science that has contributed to the development of this therapy. Although the vaccine may cause mild side effects, I know the benefits of receiving this therapy far outweigh the devastating short and long-term impact of COVID-19 disease. I hope we can end this pandemic quickly and safely and I am committed to ensuring the community also remains as safe as possible."

Amaka Eneanya, MD, assistant professor of Medicine and Epidemiology, HUP

