

I am a Geographer ...



Raymun Ghumman

General Practitioner

After a stimulating SOSE program in middle high school, I went on to study VCE Geography. We had a small class of only about eight or ten students and a fantastic teacher, Mrs Rhode, who encouraged us to think critically about the world around us, both locally and globally, and the interaction between the two. As a teenager who was curious about international affairs, nature conservation and social inequity, Geography presented the intersection of these areas. Facilitated discussions forced us to consider how current social and environmental issues are shaped by history, economics and politics.

Needless to say, I was hooked, which led to my decision to complete my Bachelor of Arts major in Human Geography. 'How humans interact with their environment', was my simplified explanation to those curious about the selection of what seemed to be a little understood subject area. Urban design, resource management, power and poverty were just some of the subjects I covered. The highlight, however, was undoubtedly a three-week field trip to the Nkomazi region of South Africa, east of Johannesburg, where we had the opportunity to apply theoretical classroom concepts in a practical real-world setting.

After some time I realised that, while I enjoyed studying humanities, I missed science and was contemplating how I could combine my love of biology with my passion for social justice and environmental protection. A career in health beckoned and it was in South Africa that I began to appreciate the broader context of health, which was not

just about physiology and the absence of pathology, but all those other factors that had been first been highlighted in Geography: the interconnections of historical events, economic policies, political positions, environmental pressures and social structures, to name a few.

I ended up studying post-graduate medicine and have recently completed my Fellowship in General Practice. Situated in the community and providing continuity of care across an individual's, and often their family's life, general practice truly encompasses the breadth of the biopsychosocial approach to healthcare. It complements my particular interest in the social determinants of health – those conditions people are born into, grow, live and age in – and influence their health outcomes and which ultimately tie back to those broader contextual issues that I've learned about in Geography.

While I may not directly identify as being a 'geographer' now, and I don't work with geographers in my daily work, my Geography studies certainly served as a foundation for my career path and no doubt will continue to inform areas of future pursuit in public health. To be able to view the world through a geographic lens while working in a clinical context enables me to better recognise the challenges for people in attaining and maintaining good health and a sense of wellbeing, *and* for our systems in meeting the health demands of a diverse population in a changing global environment.