

Nathan Smart's Journey as an Aspiring Family Nurse Practitioner



Meet Nathan Smart, a graduate student in BYU's Family Nurse Practitioner Program (FNP) who emulates what it means to practice the Healer's Art. Despite being a patient for nearly half of his life, Nathan's health setbacks didn't deter him; instead, they ignited a passion for nursing, driving his determination to help others.

During Nathan's freshman year of high school, he started experiencing constant fatigue and intense muscle aches, which severely hindered his ability to carry out daily tasks. After months of visits with doctors and specialists, he was finally diagnosed with Lyme Disease at age 15. Nathan immediately underwent a series of treatments, some of which resulted in permanent side effects, including Ulcerative Colitis, a chronic inflammatory bowel disease.

During his time as a patient, he felt moved by the many healthcare workers that strived to help him and his family. "I fell in love with nursing because they're very personable," Nathan shared. "They helped me and my family feel comfortable every step of the way." Despite facing these difficult health challenges for nearly a decade, Nathan sees these experiences as essential for shaping his present and allowing him to help others.

Although Nathan was left with some lingering effects of treatments, he became symptom-free from Lyme Disease and was determined to begin his academic pursuits.

Prior to attending nursing school, Nathan initially was planning to become a nurse anesthetist, but he changed his mind after shadowing some professionals in that field. "I wanted to do something that's more involved with patients and offered that patient-provider relationship", said Nathan. He began to explore other options as a nurse and settled on becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) further down the line. In 2018, he graduated from Westminster University with his Bachelor of Science in Nursing. From there, he built experience in his field by working

at Huntsman Cancer Institute and as a travel RN for the American Staffing Professionals in Park City.

In late 2021, Nathan felt he was ready to further his education and work towards his FNP degree. While exploring various graduate schools, a friend suggested that Nathan apply to BYU. After researching the program, he was attracted to its affordable tuition and clinical placement opportunities. Nathan liked how BYU “keeps God in the center of healthcare.” He has a testimony of divine intervention, like how when he faces roadblocks with patients that God might give him a new idea that he hadn’t thought of before. After considering these aspects, BYU ended up being the only school he applied to, and he got accepted into the program.

Nathan has thoroughly enjoyed his time in the FNP program at BYU. He explained that he loves how personable the faculty are and appreciates all the hands-on experience the program provides. Nathan also shared that when he cares for patients now, he strives to improve not only their physical health but also their spiritual and mental well-being. “Whenever I make clinical decisions as a soon-to-be nurse practitioner, I try to think of patients like how God would”, he said.

As Nathan prepares to graduate this April, he is set to make a great impact on patients’ lives and contribute to the advancement of the healthcare industry.

The College of Nursing celebrates Nathan's accomplishments and anticipates the continued success and impact he will undoubtedly have in his future endeavors. Nathan Smart’s journey is an inspiration to all aspiring nurse practitioners, reminding us of the profound difference that empathy, perseverance, and a commitment to the Healer's Art can make in the lives of others.