

October 24, 1985

Dean Debra Gillers
Committee on Admissions
SUNY at Stony Brook

Dear Debra,

I am pleased to recommend Richard E. D'Alli for admission to our next medical school class. Despite his unique record, or because of it, I recommend him most highly. He will be an outstanding student, and with his skills in communication and his mastery of the media, he can become a unique asset to our profession.

Rick is a friend to my son, a geologist at Arizona State University. At the end of 1983, Rick was commissioned to do a medical series on depressive disorders and their treatment, a commission based on some brouhaha in the community. He asked my advice and after dividing the therapy issues into three major therapies, I agreed to help him with the section on convulsive therapy. I did so with much trepidation, because my experience with other reporters was unfavorable; their desire to emphasize the dramatic, to titillate the readers with anti-medical statements, usually resulted in a hostile report which presented physicians as asses. I deferred my agreement, and suggested that Rick read some articles before calling me back. When he did call, some days later, his questions showed that he had read and understood the material. His questions were non-hostile. We discussed a script and I recommended some advocates and critics. Suffice it to say, he did his homework so well, that the final report, four sessions of 12 minutes each, was excellent, receiving numerous commendations and repeated showings.

It is a fair statement of the medical and social issues in the controversy about convulsive therapy, so fair that we have adopted it as a standard presentation to our patients and their families as part of our consent process for electroconvulsive therapy at University Hospital. (Call Mrs. Irene Carasiti on 10N to arrange a viewing.)

Since then, I commissioned him to make two training videotapes on ECT, one dedicated to families and a second for students, and these are being completed now.

It was during these interactions that Rick shared his interest in a medical career with me. I was puzzled by his desire to change his career, and spent hours in discussion. I am convinced that his career change is occasioned by his acquaintance with medical projects, his ease with physicians and patients, and his desire to dedicate his time to work with patients and to be part of the excitement that he has seen in medicine.

Rick is a warm, enthusiastic, friendly human being, with a pleasant laugh and a pleasing sense of humor. He is sincere and thoroughly honest. He has done his work well, and he is reliable. He recently married and his wife is a trained social worker who is most encouraging of his career change. My son, who has known him for more than four years, has told me of many interactions with Rick and Arlene which support my recommendation.

At age 38, Rick is older than most candidates. But he has matured well, and he is an outstanding candidate. I have no question regarding his ability to dedicate himself to the work and to complete the course of studies with better than average grades. I have no hesitation in recommending him for admission to our next class, as a candidate who will be a class leader, and who has much to offer our profession, especially as a teacher and communicator.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry