

JOHN MARTINEZ
Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2012
Studying mathematical biology at the University of Houston
Interned at The National Institutes of Health

John was inspired to become a doctor after a disheartening experience with his own physician. “He was the kindest person in the world,” John said. But the doctor’s behavior changed dramatically the moment he discovered John was gay. “I could tell that he didn’t want me to be there.”

Initially, John thought he would be a scientist, but, after the incident with his doctor, John realized he could be more useful working as a doctor. In Texas, many doctors don’t want to talk about HIV and AIDS and don’t relate well to LGBT patients, John said. They act impersonal when they test for these illnesses, which means patients are left “bottling-up” their concerns. “There’s a lot of things left unsaid,” John noted.

As an Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar, John interned at The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland. At the NIH, he examined gene expression of cytokines, the immune system’s chemical messengers, and their role in fibrosis.

After earning his M.D., John hopes to work for a non-profit clinic and eventually develop his own clinic serving the LGBT community.

John finds motivation from the naysayers who didn’t believe in him. “I want to prove that this poor little Catholic gay Mexican boy from South Texas can become a doctor and help a lot of people and do a lot of great things.”