



remarks

Ducks in a Row The final assignment of your medical education is the job hunt. If you do it well and have your details prepared when you enter an interview, you'll reap the rewards for years to come. If you do it poorly, you could find yourself doing it over.

BY DEB COLLIER



Pursuing a new job can be a schizophrenic experience.

Exciting new opportunities await, yet the process is time consuming and requires skills that may be new to many physicians. Doctors enter the professional job market for the first time at age 30 or older. Most physicians have not had much experience in interviewing, and few residency programs offer rotations that include fundamental information about the dynamics of ef-

fective job hunting.

As a hospital-based physician recruiter for the past 10 years, I have conducted hundreds of physician site visits. Too often, a candidate arrives for a day of interviews with administration and medical staff and it becomes apparent they have not given much consideration to what they want in a job. If the candidate does a little homework in advance, the

search for the perfect practice opportunity should result in the best outcome—a good match for both the physician and the organization!

Many graduating residents have one focus: They just want a job. After eleven or more years of focused training and education, it is finally time to experience the joys and benefits of practicing medicine. Armed with little more than desire and

a sense of fate, the search begins. Usually pressed for time, little if any thought is given to preparing interview questions. If this is a second or third career move, the physician may have already determined the conditions of that last practice that did not fit his professional goals, but he still may not understand the qualities in a practice that are essential to his success.

The first step towards beginning your search is to become educated about what you want and need. Invest time in preparing to begin your professional search. This will be the

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foundation for success. Narrow down the variables. What services do you need where you live? What type of employment does your spouse need? What are the pros and cons of private practice vs. employment with a health system? Are you more comfortable in a large group or a small or solo practice? Consider your strengths and preferences. Then compile a list of the important qualities you are seeking in a practice.

Next, research the market. Review advertised opportunities to learn what your choices can include. Both on the Internet and in professional publications, there are endless resources to read job postings. Although many job descriptions sound like paradise on earth, the various listings provide an idea of what situations the market has to offer. This may also give you an indication of the level of demand for your specialty and the regions where positions are available.

Salary and benefit information is always a primary concern. Published surveys offer salary ranges ranked by specialty, geographic region, type of practice, years of experience, etc. There are separate surveys for academic positions and many are ranked by employer type such as, hospital, private group, HMO, etc. Medical organizations such as the [American Academy of Family Practice](#) offer published salary information. Other reputable organizations publish salary summaries annually. Again, the Internet will prove to be a dependable source for information.

Begin to pursue advertised opportunities that appear to match your needs, but don't hesitate to call

medical centers or private groups in the desired communities to inquire about other opportunities. Many times a position is available but has not yet been promoted. Request a packet of community information through the Chamber of Commerce or local Office of Tourism. This information will offer insight to the past and predicted population growth, median age and income, and often the insurance mix. Review *Yellow Pages* listings for other physicians of the same specialty practicing in the area. Physician-to-patient ratio is a real indicator of the community need for your services. In addition, general knowledge about community lifestyle issues can quickly narrow down the choices.

Conduct phone interviews prior to site visits. Prepare a list of deal-breaker questions and ask them consistently of each opportunity representative. Ask why the position is open. Learn about the financial stability of the health-care system and/or practice. Share your strengths and why you're attracted to that specific position. Talk about your professional goals and discuss how they might fit in to the scope of services currently offered. Keep a journal of your contacts, thoughts, and questions.

Be honest about your needs and wants. Communicating key information at the appropriate time is invaluable. If you are the best candidate for the position, most employers are willing to accommodate many situations. Up-front honesty about issues that are not negotiable for you and your family will save a lot of time and create a sense of trust and openness as you proceed

through the recruitment process.

Time is a precious commodity for everyone, so use it wisely. Select the top three locations to set up one-day site visits. Protect your time by limiting the length of the first interview in case it is not a good match. Take this opportunity to discuss the future plans of the system, learn about programs that may offer you an opportunity to expand your talents and interests, and review business operations to determine what a real day at work will involve. The most successful interview is one where the candidate understands what can and cannot be offered to him and discusses what he can do for the employer.

Our approach to physician recruitment has always been to provide a factual and honest insight to our health-care system and what life is like in our community. If the candidate has taken a long hard look at what values and qualities are important to her professional and personal life prior to beginning the interview phase, then seeks a fair match in an employment arrangement, everyone should win once that contract is signed! ■

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