
2. Finding and Evaluating Practice Opportunities

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Sample

Finding Practice Opportunities

Learning Objectives

- ◆ Start looking early.
- ◆ Compose your curriculum vitae and cover letter.
- ◆ Identify sources of practice opportunities

Gathering Information

Use Your Key Issues Outline

Use your key issues outline to guide and limit your search, e.g., certain types of positions in certain parts of the country. See *Chapter 1, Making Career Decisions*, to learn how to outline your key issues.

Start Looking Early

Looking for a practice opportunity can be uncomfortable, and many physicians put off the process until the last possible moment. Unfortunately, the urgency of the situation often results in bad decisions. To reduce this risk, begin early enough so you can gather information about many practice opportunities and narrow your choices among them. If you lose interest in an opportunity, have the courtesy to tell the practice or recruiter.

Recruiters often pressure physicians to sign employment agreements far in advance. This more often meets the recruiter's need to fill the position than your need to find the right opportunity. While it may be true that a prospective employer might not hold an opportunity for you, taking time to evaluate it thoroughly is better than committing yourself to a job about which you are uncertain. Do not rush through this important decision.

Job Search Timetable

18 months before you will be available to start working

- ▶ Outline your ideal practice opportunity.
- ▶ Learn about different practice opportunities by reading advertisements and promotional literature and contacting physicians and recruiters in

Job Search Timetable

the settings and communities where you might want to practice.

- ▶ Compare what you learn about these positions with your ideal practice opportunity.
- ▶ Refine your ideal practice opportunity and/or your opportunity search, as necessary

12 months before you will be available to start working

- ▶ Hold initial discussions with physicians and recruiters to learn about specific practice opportunities
- ▶ Narrow your search to four to six practice opportunities

9 months before you will be available to start working

- ▶ Visit practices to learn more about them and the communities
- ▶ Narrow your search to two to four practices

6 months before you will be available to start working

- ▶ Negotiate an employment agreement with your first choice
- ▶ If you cannot agree, begin negotiations with your second choice
- ▶ Accept a practice opportunity

Take Charge!

Whether you choose to work with a physician recruiter or prefer other sources of practice opportunities, taking charge of the situation will improve your success in achieving your suitable, if not ideal practice.

Control

Take charge of the employment process by setting clear ground rules for yourself and for others, especially physician recruiters. Beware of people who stand to benefit if you follow their advice.

Courtesy

People remember discourteous treatment for a long time. You never know when you will run into again someone you met during the employment process. Leave everyone with a good impression of you.

Common sense

Don't be naive about the employment process: People are in it to make money. If the deal you are being offered sounds too good to be true – it probably is too good to be true.

Curriculum Vitae and Cover Letter (or Email)

Your curriculum vitae is a capsule summary of your professional career. It should contain your education, skills, credentials, and experience. You need not include information about your race, religion, marital status, age, disabilities, reasons for leaving previous positions, compensation requirements, or exam scores.

Put a summary paragraph near the top of your c.v. that outlines your training, experience, and professional goals. It will help the person reading it quickly decide if you are a strong candidate for the position.

Limit your c.v. to two pages, if possible. An academic physician's c.v. may include several pages of detailed descriptions of publications, teaching, and research activities. If this runs more than ten pages, consider preparing a one or two-page summary.

Use your word processing software's fonts and spacing to make your curriculum vitae look neat and professional. Your c.v. should present a stable career path, with no large, unexplained gaps. Put dates to the right or left side of the page so they are easy to scan. List items from most to least recent within each section.

Include a customized cover letter or email with your c.v. It should include the following key elements:

- ▶ Thank the recruiter for his or her interest in you and any information he or she sent to you.
- ▶ A sentence or two describing your professional interests and the type of opportunity you are seeking.
- ▶ Your personal requirements, e.g., location, type of community, career opportunities for your spouse, quality schools for your children.
- ▶ When you are available for interviews.
- ▶ When you can begin working.
- ▶ How and when to reach you.

Sample Curriculum Vitae

Jay Mitchell, M.D.
 1234 Sycamore Road
 Greatville, USA 00000
 (111) 555-1212
 drjay@doc.net

Summary

My training has prepared me to provide care in my specialty to patients in both outpatient and inpatient settings. I have strong interests in office procedures, medical education, and community education.

Education

M.D.	Best College of Medicine Best City, USA <i>Area of concentration in My Specialty</i>	2005
B.A.	Big State University Bigville, USA <i>Summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Presidential Scholar</i>	2001 Biology major

Training and Experience

Chief resident, My Specialty, Great Teaching Hospital, Greatville, USA <i>Developed curriculum for practice management block rotation.</i>	2006 - 2007
Staff physician, Part-time Immediate Care Center, Quicktown, USA	July 2006 - April 2007
Resident, My Specialty, Great Teaching Hospital, Greatville, USA	2006 - 2007
Volunteer physician, Part-time Free Medical Clinic of Firstplace	October 2006 – March 2007
Resident, My Specialty, Firstplace Hospital, Firstplace, USA	2005 - 2006
Teaching: Classroom and informal presentations to medical students, senior citizens, children, and adolescents.	Fall 2003 - present
Intake volunteer: Best City Free Clinic	Spring 2000 – Fall 2002

Certification

Board eligible, American Board of My Specialty