



Your First Job: Where to Look

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You've trained for years, been on call for countless nights, sacrificed so many holidays and friends' weddings – all so you could get to this point, finding your first job as an attending physician. While this is the anticipated beginning of the rest of our lives for so many of us, be aware that this is a lot of pressure to put on yourself. Finding your first job out of residency or fellowship can be a long humbling process that tests your patience. This can be a lot about being in the right place at the right time, or even knowing the right person. Flexibility will be your friend. Approach this process with an open mind. Find comfort in the fact that your first job does not have to be your dream job. And know that polite persistence is key.

Looking for a Job

When to Start Looking

When to start looking depends a lot on how much thought you have already given this process. Your approach will be very different if you have spent years knowing exactly where you

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want to work, and nothing else will do – than if you still haven't decided if you want an academic career or are more interested in private practice. It also doesn't have to necessarily be either-or.

The first step is to try to prioritize what is important to you in your career. Be able to answer – “Where do I want to be in 5 years...in 10 years...in 20 years?” – and be comfortable with that answer. Be honest with yourself. You may be interested in a 70% research/30% clinical position, you might be enthusiastic about teaching trainees, you might want to finally reacquaint yourself with the artist in you and pursue a part-time position that affords you more flexibility, or you may be primarily driven by a geographic location that brings you close to family. Once you have your priorities straight, and know what you can bend on and what is a deal-breaker – your job search will be easier to organize.

If you are interested in a heavily research-focused position, you should start thinking about your future job soon after you begin your last phase of training, whether that is a residency or a fellowship. Give yourself time to pursue and demonstrate particular accomplishments, i.e., publications or grants, which some positions may expect of you. If you dream of being a Program Director or an assistant Program Director eventually, consider the role of chief resident or chief fellow. Explore potential supplemental degrees in medical education. If you are interested in global health and want a position that provides you time to travel for Helping Babies Breathe, for instance, you should explore these opportunities during training. Cue yourself up for success by demonstrating enthusiasm and that skill set within your training program.

You should seriously begin the search for jobs in the spring prior to the last year of your training. This gives you ample time to explore different geographic locations, familiarize yourself with the resources available, and communicate with the people who will help you along this process without stressing either them or you out.

Where to Look

People

There are likely several resources available to you through your training program. Frequently, your *Program Director* and other *mentors* have helpful contacts within your institution, your region, or your specific field that may know of job opportunities or have connections with people who may know of them. These will be people who you have worked with in training, who can vouch for you, and generally who feel invested in your success. Set up meetings with them, discuss your priorities, and follow up on the leads they provide.

Contact the *graduated trainees* in the years above you as well. They went through this process not long ago and may be at an institution you want to go to, have recommendations for or against certain jobs based on their experience, and be able to provide you other helpful tips. If you have *peers you met at conferences*, frequently they may have insider information on what positions could be available in their regions. If you have made contacts with any program directors or medical directors during conferences, now is the time to reach out to them and express your interest. Make use of all the networking you've done over the past several years.

If you are looking for private positions, there are usually *recruiters* who are the best point person to contact. For example, Mednax and Envision have regional recruiters who can help you navigate and apply to available positions within your interest. Once you contact them, they will communicate with you when relevant positions become available and coordinate interviews. The same goes for locum positions – you can contact the company (e.g., CompHealth, Weatherby, LocumTenens) and they will connect with you an *agent* who will become your main contact for positions that are of interest to you.

Although not common, you may choose to hire a *headhunter*. Headhunters will actively try to find a position for you but will likely charge you a fee for this service.

Websites

The websites available for physician job searches are of variable quality. I will list a few here that are commonly used. If you are applying for a subspecialty position, there may be specific websites that are more helpful; ask fellows you know that have gone through the process. Be wary of posting your CV on a lot of these websites – frequently once you do, you will be inundated with phone calls from a variety of companies who most likely will just be wasting your time. Instead, apply specifically to positions that appeal to you, ideally with a cover letter and CV (see more on *applications* later). You can set up alerts at many of these websites so that they contact you once a position becomes available that matches your search criteria. Some general job search websites include Monster.com and Ziprecruiter.com. Job search websites specific to physicians include CareerMD.com, PraticeLink.com, NEJMcareercenter.org, Mednax.com, and jobs.pedjobs.org.

Networking Opportunities

There are both in-person and online career fairs geared toward individuals like you who are job-searching. The American Academy of Pediatrics holds virtual career fairs every few months. Get on their career center Listserv to be contacted about these. You can communicate with recruiters from many regions and institutions during these online sessions. If you have the chance to attend a conference during training in your second or third year, turn it into an opportunity to network and meet senior members from institutions you may want to work with. Recruiters are present at many of these conferences as well. Make use of this time to make connections that you can call on during your job search.