

# Your First Job: Applications and Interviews

# 13

Namrita Odackal

Now that you have explored job opportunities, it is time to think about your application and interviews.



## Application

Your application for a job position will primarily consist of two things, your CV and a cover letter. You can begin your application for jobs prior to even finding one that you are interested in!

---

N. Odackal (✉)

Neonatology, North Denver Envision Group, Louisville, CO, USA

## Curriculum Vitae

Chances are you have a preliminary version of your curriculum vitae (CV) ready to go already. If not, start it now and keep it updated as you proceed through training. Ask for examples of CVs from your peers, and keep a collection of the CVs you may come across during your training to work off of for formatting. Generally, do not include accomplishments prior to medical school. Have three references at the end of your CV (and make sure they know you are using them as a reference) whom you believe will be strong advocates of your application. Including a Medical Director, Program Director, or Division Chief makes a strong impression. Make sure to have your final CV proofread by mentors who have ample experience looking at CVs and hiring physicians.

You may even want to have a few different variations of your CV prepared depending on which type of job you are submitting it for. A CV for an academic position may focus especially on teaching experience, while one for a private community practice may focus more on quality improvement work. Whenever you write an email to express interest in a position, make sure to attach your CV. If you have an update to your CV during the application process (i.e., a new publication), use the opportunity to send an updated CV as a great excuse to touch base again with your contact for that position.

## Cover Letter

You should also have a base cover letter prepared, which you should ideally modify and customize for each position you are applying for. Cover letters should be no more than a page long. Include why you are interested in the specific position, what makes you stand out as an applicant, and what you will be able to contribute if they were to choose you. Ideally, the reader should come away with a better understanding of who you are as an applicant than if they had just read your CV.

Depending on what your initial form of contact is for the position, you may or may not want to include the cover letter from the

beginning. If you are “cold calling” just to see if a position is open, don’t include the cover letter – just attach your CV. If you are officially applying to a position from a website, then include both your CV and the cover letter.

---

## **Interview Process**

If you receive an invite for an interview, that is half the battle! Be prepared to interview as soon as you apply. Practice with mentors beforehand. The first contact the point person may have with you could be a phone call which serves as a behavioral interview, or it could be an email requesting to set up a time for you to meet in person. The point person could be a recruiter or the division head! You have to be ready for either because it will be your first impression and it could be your last.

Have answers ready to go for all the basic interview questions you have ever heard of such as “tell me about yourself?,” “what is your ideal job?,” “where do you see yourself in 5 years?,” “why do you want to apply here?,” and “what are your strengths and weaknesses.” Be prepared to speak intelligently about anything on your CV and practice weaving in details about yourself that you think are important into conversation. Make sure you have researched their unit and looked at resources from their website and have questions ready for them that show you have been thoughtful about the information that is available to you. If possible, mention specific individuals within the program that you would like to meet with. If you are interested in a particular research topic, have people in mind that might serve as mentors and have looked into their research already.

Depending on the position, you may have a series of phone calls or online meetings before actually meeting your future colleagues in person. Typically, for job interviews, the hospital or practice will take on the expenses for your travel and lodging during the interview, so they want to know you are serious before investing the resources. You will need to arrange time away from your training in order to pursue your interviews so make sure to plan accordingly.

Before an interview, you will usually receive a list of the people you will be meeting and instructions on where to park, where to go, etc. Ideally, you should have specific questions for the different individuals, although feel free to repeat some of the questions to get different perspectives. Remember, you are evaluating them as well to see if you and the job are a good match. Interviews for academic positions may ask you to do a presentation on your research or other accomplishments. Make sure to practice this ahead of time with a critical audience. Of course, be as professional as possible – show up early, wear a suit, be as well rested as your schedule allows. Bring a copy of your CV and, if applicable, research with you, in case it comes up. Bring something to take notes on. After your interview, make sure to write down your thoughts. Follow up with the individuals you interviewed with to thank them for their time, to express your interest, and to find out next steps.