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Physician Career Guide Checklist

When you decide to look for a new opportunity, you need focus and organization. This guide has lessons to quickly move you in the right direction, even as you manage your busy schedule. Check them off as you finish.

☐ Lesson 1: Preparing Your CV
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Part 1: Before You Begin Your Job Search
Invest a little time to get organized. You’ll be glad you did. Update your CV, then make some decisions about where you want to work and which work option you want to pursue.

Lesson 1: Preparing Your CV

Dotting the i’s and Crossing the t’s in Your CV

First, make sure your CV is up-to-date. Be both succinct and complete. Accuracy is huge; have someone read over it to ensure there are no typos or other mistakes.

- Potential employers expect to receive CVs electronically. Prepare several formats: PDF, Word, HTML and/or plain text and keep them readily accessible so you can send at a moment’s notice.
- Print several hard copies for interviews and networking.
- Gather recommendations.
- Be sure to note locums work.
- Account for any gaps in your work history. You will be asked.
Lesson 2: Lifestyle Choices

It’s Your Life - Make Some Choices

Target your search based on options that are best for you and your family. Examine your priorities and be ready to weigh the pros and cons of potential roles related to money, the type of practice you want and personal considerations.

- Compare cost of living and real estate prices in areas you’re considering.
- Explore possibilities for spouse or significant other for employment, volunteering or other community involvement.
- Research the schools and extracurriculars or other activities for school age children.
- Look for the opportunity to have a great practice, a wonderful quality of life and make good money.
- Keep your mind open. Think about places you’ve never seen before.

Lesson 3: Locums and Permanent Placement

What Will It Be: Temporary or Permanent?

Whether temporary or permanent, you have options for the duration of assignment. Consider choosing a practice style before your search begins, or be knowledgeable and keep your options open.

- Locum Tenens – temporary employment that allows an opportunity to sample the role, practice, geographical location and/or facility.
  - Assignments could last days, weeks or months.
  - Good for acquiring varied experience in different settings.
- Locums-to-permanent – allows physician to try out a position before signing a permanent contract, as a sort of “working interview.”
- Permanent placement – “traditional” way to practice.
  - Gather essential information before signing contract.
Lesson 4: Employment and Private Practice

A Lone Wolf or Part of a Pack?

Consult with colleagues who have chosen each option – employment with a hospital or system and private practice – especially people who have started in one and moved to the other, for broader perspective. There are pros and cons on each side.

- Employment with hospital or group can bring more work-life balance.
  - Physicians often have set hours and days off.
  - Fewer administrative concerns that are handled by hospital departments.
  - Income is stable.
  - Physicians are accountable to managers and executives, and must adhere to policies and protocols.
- Private practice is good for people with entrepreneurial spirit.
  - Certain degree of autonomy (though government and other regulations still apply).
  - Physician is in charge of everything. That can be good or bad.
  - Doctors decide how to treat patients (not beholden to upper managers).
  - Physicians are also responsible for the business side of the practice: paperwork, administrative issues, overhead, electronic health records, hiring and firing, etc.

Lesson 5: Government

What Does It Mean to Work for the Government?

Government healthcare is work in a government facility. That can mean a county hospital or health department, a state hospital or prison system, or at the federal level: military hospitals or Veterans Administration hospitals. More than half of Jackson & Coker’s government recruitment involves federal opportunities.

- Once you’re in the VetPro system, you can pursue opportunities at facilities anywhere in the continental United States.
- Your license from one state is accepted by the federal government in all VA locations.
- Work in the government sector brings unique fulfillment: you can give back to your community and to the veterans who have helped the nation.
Part 2: Optimizing Your Job Search
Searching for a new opportunity is very time-consuming. You can put technology, your network, recruiters and even the Internet to work for you to make the experience smoother and more efficient.

Lesson 6: Job Boards, Agency Boards and Apps
Surfing the Boards

Job boards can help pinpoint positions in specialties, practice styles and locations you're interested in. You can investigate on your own or let an agency handle the work. Boards can give you a great start and help focus your search.

Job boards allow you to search hundreds of opportunities.

- You can narrow your searches, based on your specialty and your interests.
- Some boards allow you to communicate with potential employers.
- As you are looking for a position on some job boards, employers are looking for you.

Lesson 7: Recruiters vs. Do-it-yourself
Job Search: a DIY Project, Or Do You Need an Expert?

Searching for your next opportunity as a physician takes an incredible amount of time. Amid all your clinical responsibilities, whether in practice or training, it is extremely challenging to run down every job lead and do adequate research on potential roles, facilities, practices and locations. With all the factors to consider and so many moving parts, many physicians find it most effective to put their search in the hands of experts.

- Only consider search firms with solid reputations and highly experienced recruiters.
- Recruiters can advise you on contracts and locations and help you weigh pros and cons of opportunities.
- Communicate very clearly and completely with recruiters, so they know the whole, up-to-date picture of your search.
- Experienced recruiters have a high level of expertise. Listen to their advice and let them guide you.
Lesson 8: Salary Calculators

Show You the Money
Want to know the ballpark salary you can expect for your specialty in areas you’re interested in? Salary Calculators take the guesswork—and sometimes, even the awkwardness—out of the salary issue.

Salary calculators give much more information than merely salaries.

Knowing the numbers of physicians in or nearing the “retirement zone” helps calculate the demand for particular specialties.

- The more physicians in the zone and the fewer the residents in a particular specialty, the more in-demand a candidate with that specialty will be.
- The opposite also is true: fewer physicians in the zone with a greater number of residents in that specialty, means fewer the opportunities for candidates.

Part 3: Sealing the Deal
Once you’ve pinpointed the kind of role you want and where, it’s time to go after the job. Make a strong impression in an interview and be ready to weigh offers and negotiate compensation. Depending on where your new position is, you may need to address licensing, credentialing and privileges. And always, malpractice insurance is part of the discussion.

Lesson 9: Interviewing and Site Visits

It’s Showtime (Interviewing)

Don’t assume your skills and experience speak for themselves. *You* have to do the talking to convince employers you are the best fit for their practice, hospital or system. Do research so you can ask intelligent—and relevant—questions. You are there to find out about the position and the site as much as they are there to find out about you.

- Dress appropriately, in a conservative business suit.
- Know something about the facility or practice so you can inquire specifically and intelligently.
Be ready with answers to typical questions:
  o Why do you want to join us?
  o What do you bring to the practice/facility/research project?
  o What are your strengths?
  o What are your weaknesses? This one can be tough. Try to turn it into a positive—i.e., how you are working to shore up the deficiency or turn it into a strength—without sounding contrived.

Be courteous to everyone, from the receptionist to the nurses, administrative staff, midlevel providers, technicians…everyone. Their feedback is often important and solicited by the decision makers.

Make eye contact, shake hands firmly, use the interviewers’ names in the conversation. All this will send a message about how you communicate with peers and patients.

Lesson 10: Contract Negotiation

A Little Give and Take

A contract can be a complicated document. It’s smart to get as much in writing as possible. But know that there may be different interpretations of “standard” wording. Ask questions to ensure you completely understand what you’re signing.

Have a professional — a disinterested third-party — review the contract to point out any issues you may not know about. They will know which questions to ask that an attorney may not.

  • Remember, almost anything can be negotiated. That includes starting compensation, vacation time, time off for CME obligations, etc.
  • Negotiation is just that, so be ready for some give and take. Know what matters most to you and be willing to make a concession or two to get it.
  • RVUs
    o RVU stands for "relative value unit." Some physician employers—hospitals and groups—use an RVU formula to calculate compensation or bonuses for physicians.
    o An RVU assigns value for the additional work you do beyond the hours you are assigned. It gives you a piece of the game that’s an incentive to keep productivity high.
  • Guarantees
    o A guarantee supplements salary while the practice is being built as the physician achieves high productivity.
    o Usually, a guarantee is for the first two years. The third year, it’s yours to earn.
• **Relocation**
  o Some facilities and even practices will offer packages to move you and your family to a new home within reasonable commuting distance to your new position.

• **Spouse assistance**
  o Negotiate placement assistance that may be available for your spouse in finding employment after you relocate.

• **Potential problems with contracts:**
  o Malpractice: who pays the tail?
  o Non-compete clause – 1-2 years, and a specified radius around facility's primary market is typical. But is that reasonable, given the facility's location?
  o Get practice location in writing.
  o Understand the termination clauses and determine whether there are "clawbacks."

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**Lesson 11: Licensing, Credentialing and Privileges**

**Staying Legal and Official**

The key to streamlining the licensing, credentialing and privileging process is making sure you have key documents on hand, ready to be sent. If it seems redundant, it is. But that’s the reality of the process and being prepared is your best strategy.

• **Licensing**
  o The Uniform Application for Physician State Licensure (UA) standardizes, simplifies and streamlines the licensure application process for physicians. Just fill out the UA online application once, then use it whenever you apply for licensure in another state that accepts or requires the UA for the rest of your career.
    ▪ Streamlines the process, easily updated and reusable.  
      [fsmb.org](http://fsmb.org)
  o The process of obtaining a medical license—either initial licensure or a second or subsequent license in another state—can be very challenging. To help navigate the licensure process and provide up-to-date information on licensure requirements around the country.
  o the AMA publishes the State Medical Licensure Requirements and Statistics.
    ▪ Includes required exams, training, education, fees.
• Credentialing
  o Credentialing for hospital privileges can take a long time. Your health plan credentialing depends on your privileges, so you must start the process early.
  o Learn as much as you can about hospital credentialing before you begin, to make the process easier.

• Privileges
  o Once approved, the committee appoints the physician to the medical staff for one year on the initial appointment and every two years after that.
  o Privileges can be denied if doctors don’t have enough training and/or can’t show they are competent, lose their medical licenses in other states, are excluded from Medicare or Medicaid or have previously been found guilty of fraud or abuse.
  o Privileges can be suspended if a physician does not perform enough of the specified procedure or treat enough of a patient type to stay proficient.

## Lesson 12 – Professional Liability Insurance (Malpractice)

**The Necessary but Expensive Safety Net**

It is really called “professional liability insurance,” but it’s often short-handed as “malpractice insurance.” It protects your assets, in case a claim is made against you. And sometimes, that happens.

Two types of liability insurance: claims-made and occurrence
  • Occurrence insurance automatically covers unknown claims or “tail claims.”
  • Claims-made insurance is triggered the date a claim is made.
  • Vast majority professional liability insurance is claims-made.

Claims can arise in a number of ways:
  • From an incident
  • From notification to a state medical board
  • From a licensure investigation
  • From a lawsuit
    o Served at your place of business or by certified mail
    o Insurance company will retain an attorney for you
Whether a claim is valid or not, you still have to make a claim with the insurance company. If it does turn into a valid claim, you would want coverage, which protects your assets.

**Conclusion: Search & Share**

We hope you’ll share this Physician Career Guide with a friend, on Facebook or by Tweeting the link.

Now that you’ve completed the Physician Career Guide lessons, you’re equipped for the job search. We invite you to jump in!

- Click on the “View My Jobs” button. See what’s out there for you.
- Don’t hesitate to contact the professionals at Jackson & Coker if we may help you in any way.

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