



PARO CAREER COUNSELLING HANDBOOK

“DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND YOU’LL NEVER WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE.”

That old adage is rich with promise – and pressure! Let’s face it, finding the perfect job comes with its own set of challenges, and many of us delay the task for several reasons. Sure, it’s undeniably exciting to settle into the career you’ve been prepping for your entire life, but it’s also a little overwhelming. For those in early residency there are so many new things to deal with as it is, and for those winding down residency, heavy work schedules and studying for licensing exams can put career planning on the back burner.

Given these factors, and knowing that finding your best fit is important, we’ve created this handbook to help you navigate the path successfully.

Here’s what we cover in this handbook:

TIPS FOR LANDING YOUR DREAM JOB (from your peers)

The best advice often comes from those who’ve just lived through the experience themselves. To that end, we reached out to senior residents and new physicians and curated their top tips for navigating the job-finding landscape and the transition to practice.

TIPS FOR TRANSITIONS (including out of specialty and/or out of medicine altogether)

Throughout your residency there will be moments – some fleeting, some lasting – that make you want to rethink your choices. That’s OK, even natural. A medical degree is a valued accomplishment and has many career paths beyond clinical/patient care. Here’s what you need to know.

RESOURCES AND LINKS:

- CAREER WEB RESOURCES
- PGME RESOURCES
- SPECIALTY SOCIETY RESOURCES

TIPS FOR LANDING YOUR DREAM JOB (from your peers)

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From Senior Residents:

1. Informal networking is key. Talk to your program directors and supervisors to find opinions, advice, and opportunities.
2. Talk to chiefs of staff at local hospitals to find out about job availability, and what they might be looking for in future staff.
3. Practice your 2-minute "elevator pitch". This allows you to speak concisely and spontaneously about who you are, your interests, and where you want to be.
4. If needed, prepare and plan for future academic work or certifications (Fellowships, Masters, or PhDs) to secure a job in your desired field.
5. Ask your program and staff to provide education about billings and practice management, ideally in both formal and informal settings, to assist with your transition to practice.
6. Get involved whenever you can – keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities, particularly those in your field. Paying attention can lead to future opportunities.
7. Keep in touch with near-peers to hear about challenges they are facing and successes they have had in the job search.
8. If you're having difficulties with informal mentoring, ask your program to provide a formal mentor match.
9. When on service, approach staff with similar interests and ask how they got to where they are.
10. Don't burn bridges. Word spreads quickly among programs and you will always want the ability to go back for a reference

From New-in-Practice Physicians:

1. Stay in touch with the programs, mentors, and clinics you've rotated through. You never know where a job opportunity will come from.
2. Do not be afraid to make your interests known. If you want a job somewhere, talk to physicians in that location.
3. Structure your training to be marketable. Talk to division chiefs where you'd like to work and ask them honestly about who they are looking to hire, and what skills you could develop to help you get a job.
4. Seek mentorship when possible – formal or informal. Remember that one mentor will not have all the answers so strive for balance from various perspectives.
5. Ask for honest feedback from someone you trust and use that constructive criticism to improve yourself.
6. Locum in a variety of settings to find the style of practice you enjoy.
7. Speak with a representative from the [HealthForceOntario](#) Marketing and Recruitment Agency and physician recruiters to find out about opportunities.
8. Decide if you want to work in a community or academic setting, as each can require different skills and goals.
9. Ask your program for advice and formal education around billing and practice management.
10. Work hard and set a good example on your rotations – word of mouth is important, especially in small communities and specialties. Ultimately, your career is in your hands and you have to find your own way. But you know what? You've got this!

TIPS FOR TRANSITIONS (including out of specialty and out of medicine altogether)

Throughout your residency there will be moments – some fleeting, some lasting – that make you rethink your choice of specialty or career. That's OK, even natural. You need to know you're not alone. Many doctors question their career path, but stay silent because of old cultural biases, namely: If you have doubts, you're not one of us.

Well, it's time to put that thinking to rest. Illness, new family commitments, a cross-province move or just a lack of desire to practice medicine can impact how you think about your career, including the idea that you may want to leave it all behind. Truth is, even the best-laid plans require tweaks – that is not failure, that is human.

OK, so what are you going to do about it? Here are our top tips:

1. TALK IT OUT

Every Ontario PGME program has a Wellness Office, so start here. Your Wellness Office can be a strong advocate, a place where you will receive an objective response and advice, without worrying about contractual obligations or other pressures. Their priority is your wellness, period. If you're feeling unsure about your vocational choice, they can help you pinpoint the motivation of that uncertainty. They give you an opportunity to voice your concerns in private and map out a new plan.

Another option for counselling is through the OMA's Physician and Professionals Health Program (PHP). Based in Toronto, this program provides resources including counselling, coaching, treatment of substance use and more. You can find more info [here](#).

2. ASK FOR A TRANSFER

You always wanted to be a neurosurgeon, but then you fell in love, had a couple of kids and now your priorities have shifted and you want work that lets you create a better life balance. That doesn't mean you have to give up your medical career. Talk to your PGME office and PARO about taking the next step to finding a better medical role for your new life. But, start by downloading the [Program Transfer Guide](#) for a comprehensive look at the process.

3. TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

There are two types of leave you can take:

- a.) Medical leave – These are paid leaves that will see you through you an extended period of illness. Your PARO contract covers your LTD (long term disability) insurance. You can find more information [here](#).
- b.) Personal leave – These are unpaid leaves that give you time to explore your options. Of note: These are not automatically given and will require a comprehensive discussion with your Program Director. For more info, call your Wellness Office and PARO. At PARO we can take you through all the options to find the right one for you. You've spent a lot of energy and education getting to this point, and we want to ensure you've got the right tools to make an informed choice for your future.

4. GET FINANCIAL ADVICE

If you decide to give up your residency completely, you will need to consult an expert for LTD and life insurance options. When you leave residency, your PARO LTD coverage will cease. As for life insurance, your hospital residency life insurance can be converted to another plan without medical underwriting, but you must do it within 30 days. Your pay centre can supply the necessary paperwork. Bottom line, there are financial implications to consider, so make use for the resources at hand, including those offered by the [OMA](#) and [MD Management](#) .

JOBS WHERE A MEDICAL DEGREE COMES IN HANDY

Maybe obstetrics or dermatology is off the table, but you still want to keep a hand in medicine. You can combine your MD skills with a personal passion for a truly unique career. Here are some thought-starters.

For the Tech Savvy

Telemedicine, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) play starring roles in medicine today. Join a VR company as a consultant, or work with digital developers to train other doctors on how to use new technologies in their practices and hospitals.

For the Financial Wizard

Marry your love of money with your love of medicine and join the ranks of investment banking. Here, you'll find a role uniquely suited to your strengths: healthcare equity research analyst. This career focuses on making investor recommendations based on your knowledge and research of medical companies.

For the Film Buff

Lights! Camera! Action! Every year there's a new crop of medical dramas hitting screens big and small, and many hire medical consultants or script advisors to nail the doctor talk.

For the Media Junkie

Become a health journalist or on-air commentator. High profile examples include CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CBC's White Coat, Black Art Dr. Brian Goldman, or New York Times' Dr. Lisa Sanders who writes the medical mystery column "Diagnosis." The newer iteration of this role is social influencer. Think Dr. Jen Gunter, a blogger best known for taking on lifestyle influencers like Gwyneth Paltrow.

For the Artsy Type

Love posting to Instagram? Maybe taking photos is your real calling. There's a medical career in that! Being a medical photographer requires a mix of medical knowledge and photography skills to capture clinical and surgical procedures.

For the Philanthropic

Joining an international aid organization is a great use of your medical education. According to Doctors Without Borders' website, they are looking for HIV and tuberculosis specialists, paediatricians, anaesthetists, surgeons, ER physicians, obstetrician-gynaecologists and infectious disease specialists.

For Policy Wonks

The same attributes that led you to medicine: a desire for higher education, longing to serve others and a drive to succeed, uniquely qualify you for a life of public service. Your options include local and international public health offices and agencies, or a political portfolio.

For the Business-Minded

Love the hospital environment, but want to wear suits instead of scrubs? Hospital administration could be your ticket to a fulfilling career that commingles medicine and management.

For the Extrovert

Sign on as an Event Doctor. When the world returns to normal, and concerts, festivals and large gatherings dot our calendars, this position offers the opportunity to travel and be front-and-centre at an array of cultural offerings.

For the Introvert

Think about becoming a Research Scientist in pharma or beyond. This career pursuit allows you to keep your hand in medicine without having to interact with patients or run a practice. Research positions exist in a variety of industries including drug development, government, academia and clinical settings.

Yes, your skills are transferable. Period.

Meet Dr. Seema Yasmin, Director of the Stanford Health Communication Initiative and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at Stanford University, who also happens to be an Emmy-award winning journalist (graduated U of T), Pulitzer Prize finalist in breaking news and poet.

What skillsets do MDs learn that make them well-suited to other careers?

My transition to written and broadcast journalism was made less scary by the fact that skills I had gained in medicine were completely transferable to my new gig.

- During news breaks I could triage which stories and which elements of stories needed my attention first and which could wait.
- When interviewing people for any stories but especially those where I was covering the aftermath of disaster, I pulled on the skills I learned breaking bad news to patients or building rapport and empathy quickly.
- As a poet - where my job is to observe and translate observations - I am constantly drawing on the skills I learned as a doctor where I made assessments of people by reading their skin, teeth, hair, eyes, and listening for the subtext as they shared their presenting complaint.

If you are contemplating the idea of a different career path, where do you start? You start at the point of curiosity, the point where you begin to wonder what else is possible beyond medicine. And then you start walking that path.

How do you deal with the worry that you're letting your family down by not pursuing medicine?

You let go of that worry by living for yourself and not for other people.

Did you know these folks graduated med school (and became famous for other stuff)?

Michael Crichton, Creator, Jurassic Park

Che Guevara, Revolutionary

Ken Jeong, Actor, The Hangover

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Author, Sherlock Holmes

James Naismith, Inventor, Basketball

Closer to home....

Robert Conn, PARO CEO

Corey Stanton, Creator, The Match

Dave Williams, Astronaut (and Aquanaut)

Laurent Duvernay-Tardif, NFL player

Joshua Tepper, Health Policy/Research

Samantha Nutt, Founder of War Child Canada

RESOURCES AND LINKS

CAREER WEB RESOURCES

Here are some of our favourite links to career resources and jobs. We've included a description of each to help you pinpoint the best resource for your needs.

1. HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency

The HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency provides information on available jobs and locum opportunities, as well as information on physician roles, CME programs, and physician resources. The jobs and locum opportunities tend to be most helpful for family medicine graduates, although there is information for other specialties on the website. In addition, they provide the Practice Ontario Program, which is a free career-planning service for postgraduate medical residents. Through this program postgraduate trainees can connect with a Regional Advisor. Their role is to assist all areas in Ontario to reach their physician recruitment and retention goals, and to work closely with all medical schools in the province to provide personal job-search assistance and career advice to medical residents.

HFOJobs

Practice Ontario

2. Canadian Medical Association

Joule, a CMA Company offers a number of tools and resources to help you build a thriving practice and maintain a healthy personal life. Take some time to review their **practice management resources** which include helpful guides and checklists. Also, don't miss the Practice Management Curriculum (PMC) seminar at your university.

3. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

The RCPSC website provides information on entering professional practice including podcasts and links to CMA and CPSO transition to practice resources. The Royal College website also explains maintenance of certification and describes how to maintain and document ongoing professional learning. In addition, the site links to billing guides for all provinces – a great resource for all residents, including family medicine, to find and familiarize themselves with billing codes.

4. College of Family Physicians of Canada

The CFPC website provides information on clinical resources, practice management, work/life balance, and provincial resources (ie, how to get a billing number in Ontario), which is helpful in getting a practice started and balancing everything in your first few years out. They also offer sessions at their Family Medicine Forum to connect you with early career family physicians and fellow residents.

PGME RESOURCES

McMaster University

Mac's PGME website contains an extensive list of external links relating to resident support and wellbeing, including links to the most important career counselling services (Practice Ontario, HFO MRA, CFPC, RSCPC, CMA, CPSO, OMA, MD Management). This page is a good resource to start with as it compiles the most important links for residents. The career counselling section is most useful for incoming residents and final-year residents (for the 'transition to practice' links). Click [here](#) for more info.

NOSM

Although there are no specific online resources available, the Postgraduate Wellness Program provides a variety of services including guidance with developing a healthy and productive professional identity. Click [here](#) for more info.

Queen's University

The PGME Office of the Director of Resident Affairs provides various wellness-related services available, including career counselling. This office provides support on all aspects of the resident experience including issues relating to personal, career, financial, and academic matters. Click [here](#) for more info.

University of Ottawa

The Well-being Program for Physicians-in-Training works to meet the physical, emotional, personal and academic/career needs of residents and fellows, within the Faculty of Medicine. Confidentiality and discretion is guaranteed. The Faculty Wellness Program Director can be contacted at 613-562-5800 x8507 or wellness@uottawa.ca

University of Toronto

U of T provides several links with relevant resources to help you complete your training and focus on career planning. For more info visit their [website](#).

Western University

The Learner Equity and Wellness office at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry provides trained counsellors to assist you in navigating the transition from residency to professional practice. They support medical students and residents with career counselling, CV and interview preparation, research of employment opportunities and assistance with finding or creating research opportunities. For more info visit their [website](#).

SPECIALTY SOCIETY RESOURCES

Your Canadian specialty society is often a great resource to help you formally, or informally, connect with mentors and career opportunities. As these societies update what they provide to residents and new-in-practice doctors frequently, it's a good idea to bookmark your relevant site and check back often.

Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians
Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada
Canadian Society of Internal Medicine
Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons
Canadian Association of General Surgeons
Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society (CAS)
Canadian Association of Radiologists
Canadian Dermatology Association
Canadian Ophthalmological Society
Canadian Society of Otolaryngology
Canadian Association of Pathologists
Canadian Cardiovascular Society
Canadian Society of Nuclear Medicine
Canadian Psychiatric Association
Canadian Pediatrics Society
Canadian Orthopedic Association
Public Health Physicians of Canada