Finding a Job and Negotiating the Agreement

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Why This is Important

• Turnover in physician groups is as high as 10%
• Physician departures are highest in the first two years (29%)
• 54% of physician departures occur within the first five years
  – Practice issues (31%)
  – Compensation (20%)
  – Location (13%)
  – Spouse’s career (10%)
  – Pressure of clinical practice (10%)
Outline of the Process

- Job Hunting and Create a CV
- Interviewing and Visiting Practices
  - Visiting the practices again
- Getting Job Offers/Term Sheet
- Negotiating
- Lawyers: Creating the employment contract
- Finalize Everything
- Preparing for the New Job

Job Hunting

- Start looking early summer of the last year of Fellowship
  - The earlier the better
- Resources
  - Job listing in major specialty journals (JACI and Annals)
  - Job placement centers on AAAAI and ACAAI websites
  - AAAAI and ACAAI annual meetings job fairs
  - Contacting the allergists/practices within the target region
  - Local allergy societies in the target region
  - Word of mouth from physicians – especially mentors
  - Medical headhunter services
Job Hunting

• Sending a letter of inquiry to practices in a desired location, even those without a posted job listing, can be fruitful
• Many practices contemplate hiring long before they actually advertise, thereby giving the enthusiastic applicant an advantage over others

Have a Successful CV

• Be conservative and professional
• Use a conservative font and avoid overuse of bold, italics, and underlined text
• Be concise and only include relevant information
• Information should be complete, accurate, and current
• Print on a laser printer, high quality paper, or consider professional printing, print on one side only
• The first page is considered the most important
  – Don’t try to fit everything on one page
  – A 2 to 4-page CV is considered average for a young professional
Preparing for the Interview

• Collect and analyze preliminary information
• Bring a list of prepared questions
• Dress for success
• Be early or on time
• Do not plan any other events for the same day, in case the interview goes longer than planned

During the Interview

• Listen more than you talk
• Be prepared and ask lots of questions about all aspects of the practice
• Promote your strengths and any areas of expertise
• Act professionally. Never feel “too at home.”
• Do not speak negatively of other practices
After the Interview

• Make notes of a practice after you interview
• Follow up with a thank you letter
• Consider arranging another visit

Offers

• 1-3 may be expected.
• Verbal vs. written offer
  – Written is better.
  – A written term sheet is the best.
    • Provides a clear frame work from which to negotiate
    • Based on the term sheet, then a legal contract is drawn up
    • Saves on legal fees
• Is NOT an employment agreement
The Attorneys

• Based on the offer, an attorney will draw up a legal contract.
• Get an attorney with experience in medical employment contracts
  – Should be an expert on medical employment contracts in the region where you want to practice
• Referrals from the local societies, hospitals, local practices, or state societies

Preparing for a New Job

• Negotiate and finalize the legal employment contract
• Get documentation ready for credentialing
  – Medical License
  – Malpractice and proof of previous coverage
  – DEA License
  – Insurance Credentialing
  – Hospital Credentialing
• Daily Work Schedule Template
My List: What to Look For

- My list is based on my experience
- This list is somewhat in order and is debatable
- STARTING SALARY is NOT the most important!!
  - The biggest mistake made by fellows
  - Salary is important but should not be “the” priority item in a contract
  - This criterion is incorrectly used to directly compare job opportunities
  - Making a poor choice is costly both monetarily and emotionally
  - In the long run, the financial issues all work out, no matter what you decide

#1: Academics or Not?

- Academics vs. private practice vs. industry
- In academics:
  - Career goals and expectations tend to be different
  - Opportunities tend to be more limited (location, academic departments)
  - Salary compensation for research, clinical practice, committee meetings, and teaching
  - Structure and hierarchy
- Industry is also different
#2: Family and Personal Values

- You will not be happy unless your family is happy
- Family determines
  - Location
  - Your own schedule (part-time, support group, commute to work, call schedule, etc)
  - Job benefits (insurance, vacation, etc.)
  - Spouse's job and other needs
  - Total family income
  - Extended family/friends support
  - Overall happiness

#2: Family and Personal Values

- Practice values consistent with personal values
- A healthy balance between personal & professional life
#3: Location

- Where do you want to live?
  - Geographical region
  - Size of city or town
  - Entertainment and shopping options
  - Schools and religious institutions
  - Cultural beliefs
  - Family support

- Major cities
  - Expect more competition
  - Expect lower salaries and benefits
  - Expect to travel more to satellite offices

#4: Culture and History of the Practice

- Go solo? Create your own practice culture and history
- Recognition that medicine is a business
- Mission of the practice
- Patient satisfaction
- Size of practice: number of physicians and staff
- Physician personalities, interactions, and mutual respect
#4: Culture and History of the Practice

- Physician/staff/administration interaction
- Nurturing to the new physicians – will you be assigned a mentor?
- Decision making process and practice “chores”
  - Business meetings
  - Practice administrator, office manager, physician manager
  - Subordinate or equals

- Transparency
- Feedback to new physicians, partner physicians, and staff
- Productivity pressures
- Affiliations with the community and other institutions: hospitals, university, medical community/colleagues, insurers, schools, civic organizations, etc.
- “Will I fit in?” Why did other physicians leave?
#5: Clinical Practice

- Up-to-date clinical standards and procedures
- Highly skilled clinical nurses and staff
- Doctors with same clinical practice style
- Immunotherapy and ancillary procedures
- Up-to-date equipment
- Patient satisfaction

#5: Clinical Practice

- Inpatient services
- Full service allergy and immunology (food challenge, biologics, patch testing, IVIG, etc.)
- Policy and procedures manual
- Educational meetings for staff and providers
#6: Management and Staff

- Strong management team
  - Knows all aspects of the practice and how to run a business
  - Proactive with staff and clinical problems
  - Knows the legal and insurance aspects of medicine and business (HIPAA, OSHA, Meaningful Use, ICD-10, etc)

- Happy and highly-skilled staff
  - Most likely patients will be happy
  - Provide good customer service
  - Low staff turnover

- Highly-skilled and experienced billing staff

- Employee manual and able to handle HR issues

#7: Growth Opportunities & Threats

- What are the plans and expectations about growing your practice?
- What are the competitive forces in the community?
- Will you be inheriting an established patient base or will have to start from scratch?
- Are physicians in the practice willing to make you grow?
#7: Growth Opportunities & Threats

- Will your payer mix be different than other physicians in the practice?
- Will you have to travel away from the main office to grow?
- Will you be given the resources to grow?
  - Marketing resources
  - Enough staffing and exam rooms

#8: Practice Resources & Procedures

- Electronic medical records (EMRs)
- Technology (computer and phone systems)
- Building facilities (modern looking, exam rooms, physician and staff offices, etc.)
- Web site
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- Appointment confirmations
- Handouts and billing statements
- Customer service initiatives
#9: Partnership

- What does it mean to be a partner?
- Non-partnership tracks?
- A time frame when to offer partnership
- Give general criteria for partnership
  - You should not expect to receive or have access to practice financial statements during the beginning stages of the interview process

#9: Partnership

- As an employee, knowing your partnership status
  - Employee reviews
  - Slowly reveal more detailed criteria for partnership
  - Sharing of financial information
- Buying in cost and how to fund it
- Buying out cost and retiring physicians
- Real estate opportunities
#10: Legal And Contract Issues

- Have a “Plan B” if the job does not work out
- NEGOTIATE! Do not be scared to ask.
- Non-compete clauses
  - If you have to stay in a particular city, do you want a tough non-compete clause?
- Contract length

#10: Legal and Contract Issues

- Contract termination
- Contract points – staff retention, patient, intellectual property
- Professional liability tail coverage
- Dispute resolution: handled within the practice or outside mediation or arbitration
#11: Schedule and Commute

- Full-time or part-time
- Define productivity (collections, RVUs, patient hours, etc)
- Work on weekends
- Office commute and satellite offices
- Call schedule
- Hospital consults
- Meetings (administrative, professional, community)
- Able to interact with other physicians and staff in the practice

#12: Benefits

- Health insurance
- Vacation time
- Educational time and allowances (CME)
- Moving expenses
- Signing bonus
- Retirement plan
- Malpractice premium
- Disability and/or life insurance
- Computer/car/cell phone allowances
- Medical licenses and credentialing
- Time to prepare for board exam
- Professional societies
#13: Salary

- #1-12 affect your salary
  - Higher functioning practices might have higher overhead: salaries, marketing, equipment/EMR purchases
  - Big cities have more competition
  - A higher beginning salary could be a red flag for potentially expensive and difficult partnership criteria and/or a more expensive buy-in/buy-out

- Use the salary for negotiation on #1-12
  - Multiple ways of structuring salaries
  - Salary guarantees and types of bonuses (incentive/productivity and signing)

- Be careful with salary surveys because of small sample size
  - Trust only the AAAAI FIT exit surveys
  - Other published surveys tend to list higher salaries
Last Words of Advice

• This is a marriage after speed dating
• Start the search early
• All practices are not created equal
• Visit the practice several times
• Come prepared during the interviews, ask a lot of questions, and act professionally
• Observe all aspects of the practice

Last Words of Advice II

• This is going to be difficult. After years of training, your career path is no longer structured. No more rotations.
• There are probably more criteria that I have not thought about.
• Have to do lots of soul searching – personal and family
• Be honest with yourself
### Last Words of Advice III

- Get lots of information. Speak to other allergists, program directors, staff employees, etc.
- Gut feelings – might have to base your decision on subjective criteria rather than objective criteria.
- Your ultimate goal should be happiness. You cannot put a price on happiness.
- Once you make your decision, do not justify your decision by criticizing the other opportunities.

### Resources

- AAAAI web site (www.aaaai.org)
  - Practice management/practice resources
  - NAIA academic career development webinars
- **AAAAI Practice Management Resource Guide**
- AAAAI Practice Management Workshop (2011) on DVD
- NAIA-FIT Mentor-Mentee Program