Allergy Practice Options: What's Your Best Fit?

Amber Patterson, MD, FAAAAI
Mohamed Yassin, MD, FAAAAI
Michael Rupp, MD, FAAAAI

Academic
Hospital Employed
Private group
Solo private
Allergy Practice Options: What's Your Best Fit?

Amber Patterson, MD, FAAAAI
Academic
Hospital Employed

Academic & Hospital Employed Practices

Job history:
1. Academic Hospital Employed x 4 years
2. Solo-allergist
   within private multi-specialty x 2 years
3. Hospital Employed (100% clinical) x 2 years

Declined opportunity to start private solo practice with local hospital support.
Is Academic Practice a good fit for you?

Academic Practice is a great fit for individuals who:
1. Enjoy teaching
2. Want to pursue research
3. Desire affiliation with a well-known institution
4. Desire an educationally stimulating environment

Advantages of Academic Practice

1. Academically stimulating
2. Become a national/international expert
3. Less clinical time allows for academic pursuits
4. Institutional support and opportunities
5. Camaraderie of colleagues
Disadvantages of Academic Practice

1. Low pay, no student loan repayment
2. Competitive environment
3. Stress of making academic promotions
4. Managing the “creep” of responsibilities
5. Commute in metropolitan area (40 min each way during rush hour)

Is Hospital Employed Practice a good fit for you?

Hospital Employed Practice is a great fit for individuals who:
1. Want to focus on clinical care
2. Prefer the “freedom” of having someone else manage people and business
3. Want to leave work at work
Advantages of Hospital Employed Practice

1. Patient-centric
2. Private practice pay and bonuses
3. Corporate benefits (health insurance, HSA, 403B, 457, group life insurance, CME $)
4. No responsibility to manage people/staff
   - No hiring, firing, disciplining, setting salaries
5. More time for family/personal interests
6. Walkable/bike-able commute (5 min drive)
7. On days off, I still get paid

Disadvantages of Hospital Employed Practice

1. Press-Ganey
2. Bureaucracy
3. Managed by non-physicians
4. Risk of termination
5. No equity in business (when I retire, there’s no practice to sell)
6. Feeling like a cog in a wheel
Comparing Academic vs Hospital Practice

Clinical data

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>New patients</td>
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<td>1186</td>
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<td>Return visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT patients</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>700 (assumed ENT group IT patients)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No show rate</td>
<td>&gt;50%</td>
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Earnings Record

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<th>Work Year</th>
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<td>2006</td>
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</table>
Personal reflection

What are your “now needs*”:
Career goals
Family needs
Personal interests
Financial obligations

*Needs/goals/obligations change
Solo Allergy Practice

Mohamed Yassin, MD, FAAAAI
Allergy, Asthma, and Pulmonary Associates
Saint Cloud, Minnesota
myassin@cloudnet.com

Solo Practice since July 1992
(Rejected offers to join local health system)

Is Solo Practice a Good Fit for You?

• Solo practice is not for everyone
• Solo practice is a great fit for individuals who are:
  • Planners
  • Organized
  • Great communicators
  • Have or willing to learn leadership qualities
  • Have a “stomach” for risk taking, (though it is not a risky job but it is perceived as such)
  • If not single, must have supportive life-partner
Advantages of Solo Practice

• Solo practice is extremely rewarding, my best days are Mondays 😊
• You get to set up and practice the way that fits your style
• Solo practice is “family oriented,” with good planning you can make it to your kids activities and family functions
• You can plan your family vacations and attend CME conferences as you desire (no $ limits)

Advantages of Solo Practice

• Patients prefer to see the same doctor
• All patients are “your patients,” you don’t need to read 10 pages to know them two minutes before the appointment, no stress
• Easy to establish superb community recognition compared to a single specialty group
• You can set high standards for your practice
• You can achieve patient-centered practice goals and adhere the practice vision and mission
Advantages of Solo Practice

- Financially rewarding, salary and benefits
- Important; don’t rush to become “allergy shots” doctor
- In 2018:
  - Worked 153 days
  - New patients: 783
  - Return patients: 1298
  - Current patients on Immunotherapy: 523 + 22 Venom
  - No shows: new 40, RV 35 total 75 out of 2674, (2.8%)

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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
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Advantages of Solo Practice

- Own your office building and pay yourself
- Real estate income is passive “retirement” income, low tax rate
Disadvantages of Solo Practice

• Initial planning and start up can be stressful when compared to joining any established practice

• Learning management skills is a must to be successful, it is desired but not required in other types of allergy practices

• You need to hire a hospitalist or internist to cover your practice / allergy injections when on vacations. “Don’t hesitate to hire someone”

Disadvantages of Solo Practice

• You are practicing alone, no one to discuss cases with. *Thanks to “facetime”, you can have a mentor that you discuss cases with if needed. Attend all annual meetings Academy and College*

• Succession plan or exit strategy is needed, less of an issue in other types of practices. *But remember, if you walk away after only 15 years you have enough financial gains and real estate*
If You Choose Solo Practice:

• Read my tips on solo practice (practice matters)
• Have a mentor that you can call and discuss things with when needed
• If possible visit one or two well established solo allergy practices

Employed Small Group & Owner Small Group Practice

Michael R. Rupp, MD, FAAAAI
Medical Director/Owner
The Allergy & Asthma Clinic of Southern New Mexico
Is Employment in a Small Group a Good Fit?

- Advantages
  - It’s not your problem
  - Guaranteed pay
  - Consistent hours
  - Vacations do not require coverage
  - Entering an existing practice ethic and culture
  - Other providers to learn from/discuss cases
  - Billing support at start
  - Trained staff
  - Community reputation established for group
  - Practice has knowledge of good referral sources for other needed care
  - Better benefits access than solo practice
  - You do not incur start up costs of a new practice

- Disadvantages
  - You will not be the senior person
  - Salary cap
  - Compromise with partners over:
    - Vacation time/date
    - Meeting attendance
    - Call coverage
    - Shot coverage
    - Practice standard of care vs. current training or guideline recommendations
    - Staff utilization
  - Practice ethic & culture
  - Staff you did not train
  - Community reputation
  - You may not have full control of schedule or hours worked
Pitfalls of Small Group Employment

- Staff who are family members of owner/boss
- Employees who will go over or around you to maintain status quo
- You will most often play second fiddle to owners/partners
- Unrealistic buy out/partnership expectations and cost
- You inherit both the good and the bad
- Unusual practices/policies
- Personality conflicts/differences
- EMR

Practice Numbers Employed

- Worked 184 days
- Saw 20-25 patients per day
- Group (2 providers) have 1300 IT patients
- Saw 350 new patients and continued with 1500 continuing patients
Small Group Employee Financials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>$353,338</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>$97,500</td>
<td>$187,619</td>
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To Be Successful as an Employee in a SGP

- You need to be:
  - A collaborator
  - Patient
  - Willing to take orders and “pay your dues”
  - Patient
  - Accept the effects of another management choices
  - Risk averse
  - Willing to share patients
To Be a Successful Owner of a Small Group

• Be willing to take some risk
• Have organizational and leadership skills
• Be willing to invest additional time and energy above and beyond patient care responsibilities
• Learn how to recruit
• Have buy in from your family
• Develop a good group governance strategy with your partners
• Continue to collaborate and patiently develop group practice standards

A Word About Governance

• This is crucial
• This is your partnership bible:
  • How are shares allocated and terms for discharge/purchase of shares from partners who retire, cannot work, etc
  • Insures partners against loss
  • Provides boundaries for vacation time, productivity, etc
  • Includes provisions for how new partners would be added
  • Outlines expectations from other partners
• The better the agreement is up front the less conflict later
Advantages To Ownership of Small Group

- Autonomy with consent
- Collaboration
- Ability to afford practice resources with less risk (spirometry, FeNO, CT, etc)
- Coverage for illness, birth of children, etc
- Shared call
- Shared shot coverage
- No need for outside physician coverage for vacation, meetings, etc
- Improved revenue when practice is healthy

Disadvantages to Small Group Ownership

- Autonomy with consent
- Change is slower than solo practice
- Partnership is like marriage
- It takes planning to make the patient experience consistent
- Your total annual revenue depends on people besides you
- Your partnership depends on delegation and task sharing
You Will Fit With Small Group Ownership If

• You are a good collaborator
• Enjoy working in groups
• Are patient
• Are willing to trust other people
• Want some security as far as call and coverage
• Are organized
• Enjoy developing others