

ADVENTURES IN MEDICINE

Career & Life Planning

Survival Guide



Interviewing

Discovery Resource

ST-06





Your Interview Guide:

Alexis Depre, CMSR

Physician Relations Manager, Southern Illinois Healthcare

American Association Physician Recruiter, Diplomat, DASPR

B.S.N., Loyola University Chicago; M.B.A., St. Xavier University

In her efforts to recruit and retain physicians and other medical talent, Alexis Depre has helped Southern Illinois Healthcare significantly grow its services and market share as the regional healthcare system leader. She brings a wealth of experience, including 15 years in direct patient care. She has recruited virtually every medical specialty and assisted physicians in the transition from private practice to hospital employment. She continues to develop breakthrough programs to promote physician satisfaction and retention.

A Board member of the Shawnee Hills Wine Grape Growers Association, Alexis appreciates tending her family's vineyard, winemaking, reading, photography and travel.



Your Interview Guide:

Lorren Pettit

Managing Consultant, Press Ganey

Associate Professor of Sociology, Indiana University South Bend

B.A., University of Winnipeg; M.S. (Gerontology), Baylor University;

M.B.A., University of Dallas

Lorren Pettit is a proven strategist at Press Ganey. In his 20-plus years in healthcare operations and corporate planning, he has launched some 70 new products and services for providers, as well as two multi-million-dollar skilled nursing facilities. He has worked to improve relationships between hospital leaders, physicians and employees in over 350 hospitals in North America. In his spare time, Lorren enjoys his family and playing ice hockey.



With more than 11 million surveys processed annually, Press Ganey provides services to drive healthcare improvement initiatives, based on extensive patient, employee and physician feedback.



In This Stage: Interviewing

There are few moments more awkward or frightening than staring at a grizzly, eye to eye.

While a prospective employer is not a life-threatening adversary like a grizzly, for some unprepared residents, the first interview can be strange and awkward.

How will you prepare for interviews? What questions will **YOU** ask? What questions will **THEY** ask? What do you wear? How will you follow up?

In this stage you will research openings and organizations that may be a potential match with your priorities. Then you'll prepare for interviews by identifying questions and preparing responses to commonly asked questions. By the end, you'll be ready to conduct interviews with excitement and confidence.

While there are always new challenges in any adventure, with good preparation you'll put your best foot forward and identify a good opportunity quickly!

Get your shoes shined. We're going out.

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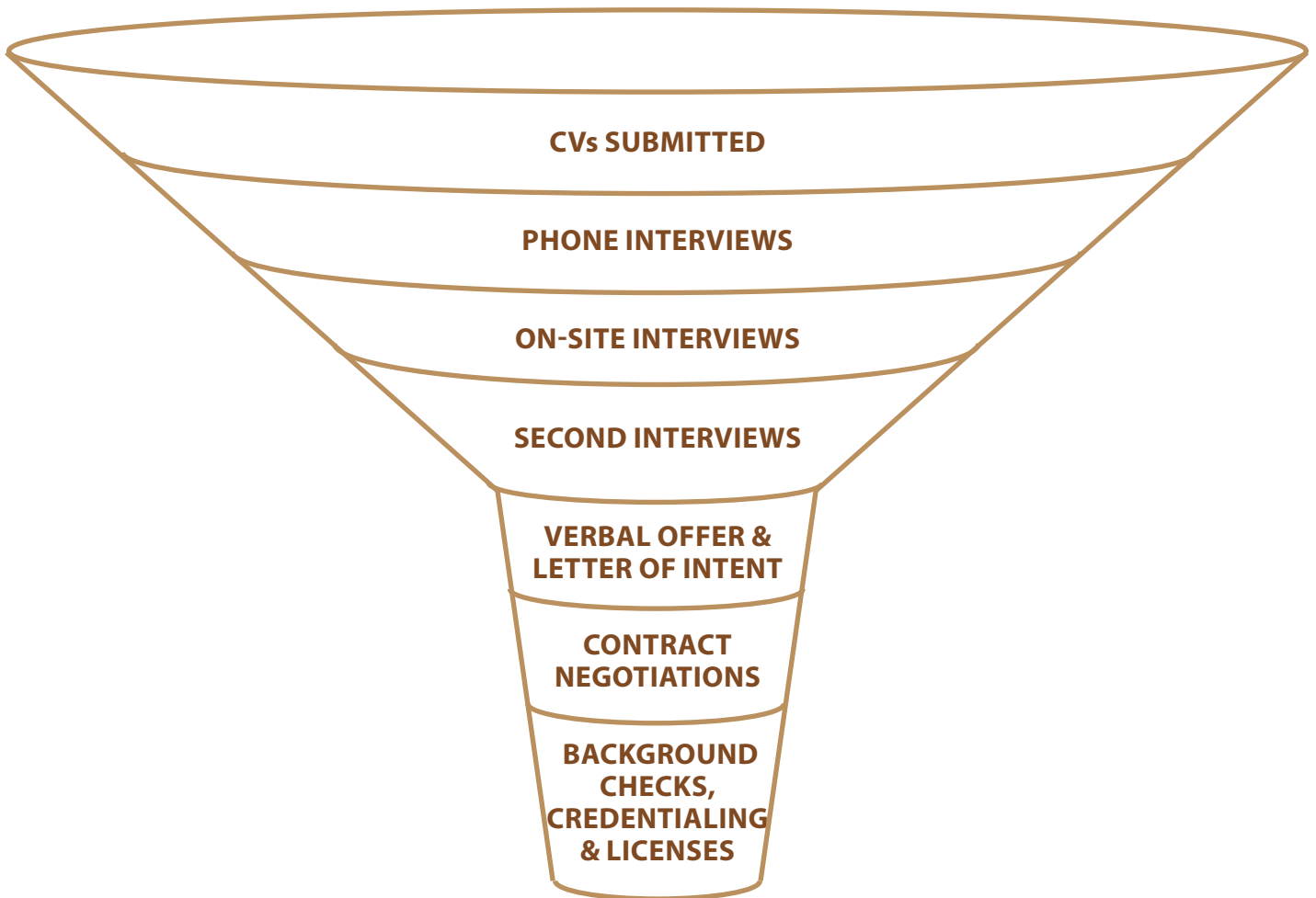
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Interviewing: Two Sides to the “Job Coin”

The interview process represents an interesting dynamic: a two-way street that combines the desires of two parties (physician and employer) to ultimately achieve a win-win outcome (the best fit). Your desire is to find a job and organization that meets your needs and expectations; whereas, the employer is looking for a physician who fits their job requirements and the culture of the organization and contributes to the bottom line. Both parties find themselves on a **FACT-FINDING MISSION** during the interview process. By the end, both parties should feel confident to make a final decision (to hire and to accept). On the flip side, one or both parties may determine that this job might not be the best fit after all. It's OK to come to this conclusion, address the situation and move on.

Hiring Process

The graphic below provides an illustration of common activities associated with the hiring process.



There are two factors impacting the importance of the hiring process and timeline:

- **The significance of the investment.** Hospitals and groups spend a significant amount of money in securing a physician; therefore, they want to minimize their risks before making an investment.
- **The strategic significance of the physician.** Physicians play a significant role to a hospital's or group's strategic success; therefore, the fit must be right. A wrong placement can have many residual implications – financial, physician collegiality, employee perceptions of the healthcare organization, employee perceptions of the medical staff, patient satisfaction, and more.

THE HIRING PROCESS — STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES

STEP	WHAT HAPPENS?
1. Candidate targets job opportunities and submits CV.	Using your personal and career priorities list, identify names of potential hospitals, practices, etc. Conduct online search, work with a recruiter, and/or cold call potential employers. For each opportunity that you would like to learn more about, send your CV to either the physician recruiting firm who is representing opportunity or to the in-house recruiter.
2. In-house recruiter receives CV.	In-house recruiter reviews all incoming CVs and identifies the most interesting candidates for review.
3. Selected CVs are forwarded to medical director or hiring physician for further review.	Having received a CV, the medical director or hiring physician will review and assess. The recruiter has a responsibility to the organization and the candidate to make sure the timelines are reasonable to keep the candidate submission top of mind. The goal is placement with qualified, reasonable physicians who are good fits for the organization and community.
4. If CV is approved, the medical director or hiring physician conducts a phone interview with the candidate.	Once a CV has been reviewed and approved, the director or physician contacts the candidate to conduct a phone interview. Although the phone does not replace an on-site interview, basic information can be gained such as clinical expectations, qualifications, organizational culture, and candidate's ideal match for the organization. Phone conduct and etiquette are also evaluated.
5. The medical director or hiring physician determines if the candidate should be brought in for an interview.	After completing the phone interview, the director or physician must determine if they would like to bring the candidate in for an on-site interview. In an effort to consider the best use of everyone's time and resources, it is important to schedule the on-site interview with as many decision-makers as possible.
6. On-site interviews are conducted with the candidate.	Most often, site visits are set at the availability of the candidate. The hiring organizations will continue to interview until it is determined a desired candidate has agreed to sign. Site interviews can take seven days to arrange and last one or two business days. Weekends are a great time to look around the community.

STEP	WHAT HAPPENS?
7. The medical director or hiring physician determines if the candidate should be brought back for a second interview.	The director or physician must decide whether or not to bring the candidate back for a second on-site interview. If both parties are pleased with the initial interview and express an interest in further exploring a potential relationship, then the process continues. Second interviews may be more challenging for the candidate, as they have to take time to travel to the area a second time. Second interviews are necessary if key decision makers were not available on the first visit.
8. An offer is extended verbally or via a letter of intent.	Offers may come in the form of a letter of intent. This is a tool used to negotiate specific terms outlined in the executable contract. After a site visit, it is typical to continue the offer and contract process remotely by phone, e-mail or fax, which means it may take a few weeks to finalize the agreement. Recruiters can help with an understanding of the timeline and keep candidates informed of where they are in the process.
9. Executable contracts are drawn up by the hiring organization and reviewed by the candidate and possibly their attorney.	At this point, the ball is in the candidate's court and the timeframe can vary widely. An attorney's review of the contract can take a few days. After that, there may be requests for changes or revisions that must go back and forth between your attorney and the hiring organization. This process requires more time, perhaps up to 30 days.
10. Organization conducts extensive background checks, credentialing, certifications, etc.	This pre-employment procedure is completed to ensure there are no licensure restrictions or sanctions to practice by the candidate — most notably, sanctions for professional service payment from federal programs. For example, default on federal student loans can exclude a physician from participation in federal insurance programs, primarily Medicare, which is a larger component of most practice revenues and the threshold for all other commercial payors. DUI's or bankruptcy may speak to character. Bad credit may be an indicator of high risk for practice loans, like income guarantee or student loan repayment. Employers must also vet candidates and ensure they have the ability to obtain state licensure and hospital privileges without restriction prior to executing a contract.

You can expect the overall timeframe for the hiring process to vary anywhere from a few weeks to three to six months, depending on the organization, candidate or position.

Do Your Homework

We highly recommend that you **RESEARCH** a hiring organization before you have any phone or on-site interviews with them. Becoming educated about the organization and key people (e.g., medical director, CEO, hiring physician) will help you formulate questions to ask during the interview and communicates to the organization that you are organized, prepared, and above all, interested in the opportunity.



GUIDE POINTS

Tips for Research your Potential Employer

- Visit the organization's website to learn about:
 - Size of facility, number of beds
 - Number of employees
 - Number of years in business
 - Rankings against similar facilities/organizations
 - Organization's mission, vision, and values
 - Who they serve: type of population, patient mix, demographics
- Do an Internet search for the organization's name to check if they have been in the news lately.
- Investigate their reputation using research sites like:
 - **HCAHPS:** www.hcahpsonline.org
(Organizational, departmental or service line awards or distinction.)
 - **American Hospital Directory:** www.ahd.com
(Free profiles of hospitals)
 - **Hospital Value Index:** www.hospitalvalueindex.com
(Free online tool that evaluates and compares hospital performance on multiple factors that go in to providing value)
 - **Top 100 Hospitals:** www.top100hospitals.com
(Listing of the best clinically and fiscally operating hospitals in the U.S.)
- Check for mentions in scholarly journals and medical association publications.
- Use networking: who do you know who works there or has worked there? Ask them about what it's like to work there and the politics of the organization.

Conducting Interviews

Interviews provide an opportunity to market and promote yourself as the best candidate for the position. Employers interview you to assess how you look, how you interact with people and how you might fit within the organization. Remember, your **PERSONAL SKILLS** – including desire, ambition, attitude, enthusiasm, self-discipline, communication and bedside manner – can be as important in the hiring decision as your **CLINICAL SKILLS**.

Throughout the interview process, the hiring organization is looking for and verifying the following:

- Communication skills
- Emotional intelligence (bedside manner, professional collegiality)
- Attitude as a team player
- Clinical competency
- Productivity
- Operational efficiency

Phone Interviews

The overall purpose of phone interviews is to verify qualifications and determine if this position fits primary requirements on both sides.

HIRING ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS

- Motivation: What are you looking for? Why did you pursue medicine?
- Practice setting: What's your ideal practice setting?
- Experiences: Highlight medical school, internship and residency experiences. What do you like most and least? How did you deal with challenging professional and personal experiences?
- Expectations: What are your expectations relating to your priorities (geographic location, quality of life, work and work environment)?

YOUR QUESTIONS

- How would you characterize the relationship between administration and the medical staff? The relationship amongst the medical staff?
- How do you gather and monitor the concerns of your medical staff?
- Have you conducted a satisfaction survey of your medical staff? What were the main findings? Do you have a plan in place to address these concerns?

Upon completion of the phone interviews and assuming that both parties choose to proceed with the interview process, the next step involves scheduling and conducting on-site interviews.

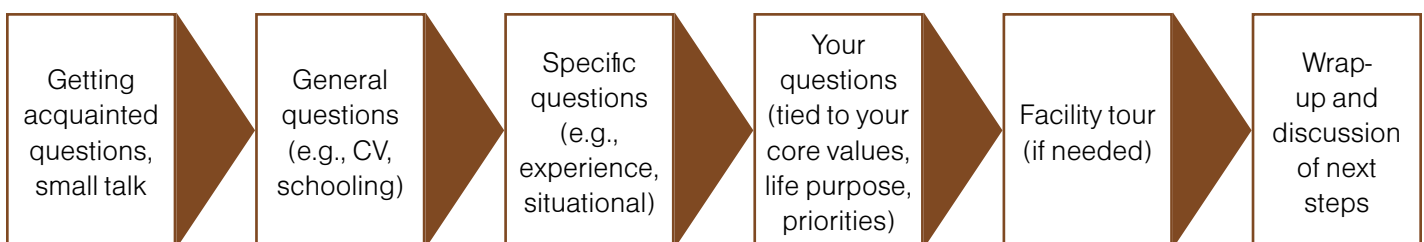
On-Site Interviews

In preparation for on-site interviews, be aware that there are many details that must be taken care of ahead of time (e.g., travel, schedule, agenda). If you work with a recruiter, their job is to serve as liaison between you and the hiring organization and to coordinate logistics. This saves you a lot of **TIME** and potential **HEADACHES** due to unforeseen changes and situations that may come up (e.g., cancellations, date changes).

Because the selection process usually involves more than one decision-maker, it is customary to meet with several staff members. This should be viewed as a benefit. It gives you the opportunity to meet with people at various levels within the organization, as well as different personality types — allowing you to evaluate your fit in the environment.

The interviewer will ask a lot of questions, so being prepared is essential. Well-thought-out responses should be immediate, but not rote. The more questions you can anticipate and answer, the better the interview will flow. Preparing for potential questions also enables you to identify the type of position and organization you desire. Try **NOT** to answer the questions the way you believe the organization would like them to be answered. This will allow both parties to truthfully determine whether or not there is a good match.

The interview will likely flow along the following outline, although your individual experience could vary.





GUIDE POINTS

Interview Etiquette

- Arrive at least 10 minutes early, but not more than 30 minutes.
- Announce your presence to the receptionist, but don't engage in additional conversation unless initiated by them. Jokes and wisecracks may offend them.
- Bring something to read in case there is no reading material while you wait. If there is a delay, be patient and don't show any outward signs of annoyance.
- Listen carefully and be concise with your answers. Ask for clarification but don't ramble on. Be considerate of their time.
- Allow the interviewer to select topics and take the lead in asking you questions. This will help you understand what problems or issues they may be facing, so use this to your advantage. Be polite to everyone you meet and don't take control.
- Be relaxed and appear confident. Comfort portrays that you are smart and puts the interviewer at ease.
- Avoid things that distract from the interview. Fidgeting, playing with your pen, doodling, tapping your feet, leaning on the desk, touching your face or hair, or rearranging things on the desk may indicate your nervousness or lack of confidence.
- Turn your cell phone off or on vibrate if required to leave it on.
- Look like you want the job by having a professional appearance. Have neat, clean, well-trimmed hair. Be discreet with jewelry and wear conservative attire.

HIRING ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS

There are many questions that could be asked by the interviewers and far too many to list them here. Depending on the person conducting the interview, the following factors play into the types of questions they may ask, such as:

- Role in the organization (e.g., CEO, medical staff director, practicing physician, nurse, administrator)
- Personality (e.g., analytical, extrovert, introvert, personable, stand-offish)
- Role in the interview process (e.g., specific qualities, background, qualifications, emotional intelligence)

Many organizations provide their interviewers with a list of questions, asking them to rate the candidate along specific criteria. Typically the last question is, “Do you recommend we hire this physician?” This is the ultimate question you want answered affirmatively.

Each interviewer evaluates and assesses the candidate in his or her own unique way. Bringing these perspectives into discussion is designed to make a good hiring decision for the organization.

EXERCISE: GETTING ACQUAINTED AND GENERAL QUESTIONS

We recommend that you be prepared to answer some of the most commonly asked questions, listed below and on the following page. Record your responses in the spaces provided on the following pages. Be real, be honest, and be sincere. You may want to revisit Stage 4 and review your **CORE VALUES, LIFE-PURPOSE STATEMENT**, and **PRIORITIES** to help you answer these questions. Also, you might consider the **30-SECOND ELEVATOR SPEECH** you wrote in Stage 5 to describe who you are and what you’re looking for in a job.

QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
Tell me about yourself.	



QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
Why did you become a doctor?	
Why did you choose this specialty?	
What can you offer this organization / hospital / group?	
What are your strengths and weaknesses?	
What interests you about this job?	



QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
What does your ideal opportunity look like?	
What's your ideal work setting?	

Specific Questions

Specific questions often fall into the following categories:

- Experience (past jobs, work experience)
 - I see that you did _____. Could you tell me more about this?
 - What was this experience like for you?
 - What did you like or not like about it?
 - What challenges did you run into with ... ?
 - How fluent are you in other languages?
- Situational (Past experiences predict future behaviors.)
 - Tell me about a time when _____. How did you handle it?
 - Describe a situation when you had to work with difficult person. How did you handle the conflict?
 - What three words would your co-workers, program director, or attendings use to describe you?
 - Describe how you handle a difference of opinion with a colleague or superior.
 - How do you handle stressful situations?



GUIDE POINTS

Press Ganey Associates, Inc., a leading healthcare research and consulting firm, considers the following in evaluating physician perceptions of a hospital:

- Quality of patient care that includes:
 - Staff's reliability in recognizing and reporting changes in patients' conditions
 - Teamwork between doctors and nurses at this facility
- Ease of practicing at the hospital, such as:
 - Admitting patients
 - Turnaround time for lab results
- Communication and collaboration with hospital leaders. For example:
 - Degree to which physicians are involved in decision making at the hospital
 - Visibility/accessibility of hospital administration

- Personal (preferences, likes, dislikes, expectations)
 - What's your ideal location? Why?
 - What are your family's and/or spouse's preferences?
 - What are you looking for in a community?
 - Do you plan to take any time off between your residency and your new job?
 - Do you have family ties in this area?
 - What do you like to do in your spare time?
- Growth opportunities (short- and long-term goals)
 - What are your long-term goals?
 - Where do you see yourself in three, five, or 10 years from now?
 - What are your professional goals?
 - What are your research and/or academic goals?
- Concerns (red flags based on your history)
 - Any gaps in your education
 - Anything negative in your records (e.g., DUI, complaints)

YOUR QUESTIONS

Gathering and evaluating as many facts as you can about a potential employer ultimately makes the interview more **WORTHWHILE**. Not only will you gain valuable information to help make your decision, you are also presenting yourself in a more positive light by asking informed questions.

The questions you ask should be linked to the priorities that were identified in Stage 4:

- Core values
- Compensation
- Quality of life (location, community)
- Practice settings
- Work environment
- Daily work (job responsibilities)

In the space provided on the following pages, list questions that you would like to ask during the interviews.

CATEGORY	MY QUESTIONS
<p>Core Values (Alignment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's non-negotiable for me when it comes to my values? <p>Sample questions:</p> <p><i>I read the mission and vision statement of the hospital. How does that play out in real-life decisions?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe the culture of the hospital?</i></p>	
<p>Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary • Productivity • Benefits • Incentives • Bonuses • Loan repayment <p>Sample Questions:</p> <p><i>Please explain the compensation structure.</i></p> <p><i>Please explain the basic employee benefit package. What about malpractice insurance?</i></p> <p><i>Does your organization offer a loan-repayment program?</i></p> <p><i>Describe the process of transitioning from guaranteed salary to productivity compensation. How have other physicians adapted to the change after two years?</i></p>	

CATEGORY

MY QUESTIONS

Quality of Life (Location, Community)

- Housing
- Schools
- Health and fitness
- Community activities

Sample Questions:

What about the schools in this area? I have a son starting first grade next year. Which communities provide quality education programs?

Exercise is very important to me; does the hospital have a workout facility?

Practice Setting


- Partner/shareholder in a single- or multi-specialty group
- Employed position in a single- or multi-specialty group
- Academic/teaching hospital
- Independent contractor
- Locum Tenens (substitute physician)
- Hospital employee

Sample Questions:

Describe the personalities of the physicians and some of the staff members. What's it like to work on this team?

What's the biggest challenge or issue that you're working through right now?

Describe the partnership arrangements — how does this work?



TRAILBLAZERS

The following physician quotes were extracted from Press Ganey surveys. In preparation for your interviews, especially with regards to work environment, take these statements into consideration and assess each opportunity.

“This hospital’s greatest strength is the collaborative effort of administration and physicians/nurses particularly regarding patient safety and quality. I believe there has been ample opportunity for physicians to be **ACTIVELY INVOLVED** with administration in all decision-making processes; however, many physicians have not participated.”

“Overall, patient care is **SUPERIOR** here compared with other facilities. The system runs smoothly because nearly everyone here, from leadership to ancillary, cares about patients and takes the time to know who works here, which builds a sense of **TEAMWORK**.”


“The senior administration is largely devoid of physicians, making it incredibly difficult for the administration to **UNDERSTAND** or **COMMUNICATE** with its med staff.”

“As a contracted physician, we are more afraid to have a **DISAGREEMENT** with leadership and be terminated than to stand up for what is right and what makes the most sense.”

“I feel a complete **DISCONNECT** with the leadership here. Because of my frustration with leadership, I no longer have the energy or time to expend any effort on anything but my own practice.”

“We need to increase **INFORMATION GATHERING** from doctors and employees about ways to improve quality and patient safety. Many opportunities to improve processes are lost because of the mechanisms currently in place (‘has to go through committee,’ ‘add it to next month’s agenda, etc.’).”

“I would like for there to be more **DIRECT COMMUNICATION** between the admitting physician and the consults, including the hospitalist, so that proper and complete care is given to the patient. That way efficiency is being met and patients are well taken care of and sent home in a timely manner.”



CATEGORY

MY QUESTIONS

Work Environment (Organization)

- Day in the life of a physician
- Turnover rate
- Leadership, administration and employee relationships, teamwork
- Payor mix
- Work environment (pace, number of patients)
- Quality of care, patient safety
- Hospital technology and equipment
- Advancement opportunities

Sample Questions:

I am sure there are times when things don't go as planned, or we may have a difference of opinion. When these types of encounters occur, how do you work through them with your physicians?

What is the role of your physicians when it comes to making decisions? Do you ask for their opinion? What happens when physicians and administration disagree on how to move forward?

With the current state of healthcare, how is your hospital preparing for and adapting to these changes?

Work (Job Responsibilities, Expectations)

- Clinical work
- Patient mix
- Support staff
- Schedule (hours, on-call, part-time/full-time)
- Pace of work (fast, medium, slow)
- Number of patients per day
- Call, jeopardy call schedule
- Role of hospitalist
- CME
- Electronic medical records

Sample Questions:

Can you walk me through how you schedule patients?

What's the work schedule for physicians?

Describe a typical day in terms of activity, types of patients, etc.

FINISHING UP THE INTERVIEW

Don't forget to ask, "**WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**" You can also ask them where you stand amongst the other candidates, how you fit in with the organization, and when to expect a decision to be made.

Finally, make sure to ask the interviewers for their business cards.

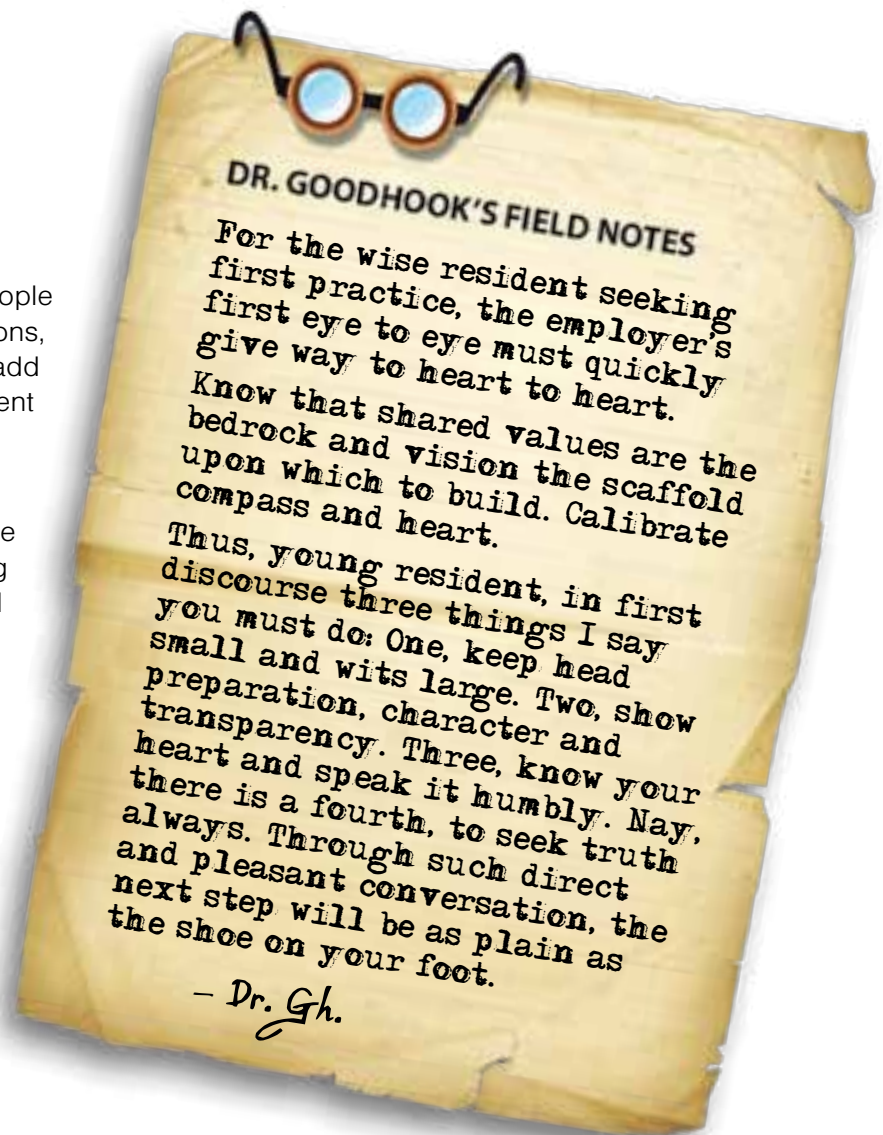
POST-INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

After the interview, write down important information while it's fresh in your mind, including:

- Your impressions
- Facts covered
- Additional questions you have
- Personal information about the people you met (about their family, vacations, etc.) so you can refer to it and add a personal touch in subsequent conversations

It's **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to initiate follow-up after the interview by sending a **THANK-YOU NOTE**. Write a personal thank-you note by hand, not over e-mail, to the people who interviewed you. Thank them for their time and the information about their practice you gained in the interview and also confirm your interest in the position.

If you want to learn more about the practice and continue as a candidate, say so. This also helps them in remembering your name and demonstrates professionalism as well as your written communication skills.



6

COMPLETED

Stage 6 Action Checklist

Make sure you have completed these tasks by the end of this stage:

- Do research on the hospital/practice you are going to interview with.
- Prepare answers to commonly asked interview questions.
- Create lists of questions to ask your interviewer(s).

"Everyone enjoys doing the kind of work for which he is best suited."

— Napoleon Hill

PASSPORT