Health Professions - Medical Job Shadowing

Objectives:
1. Learn why medical job shadowing is considered clinical experience.
2. Become familiar with the process of obtaining a medical job shadow opportunity.
3. Gain strategies for making the most of your medical shadowing experience.

What is Medical Job Shadowing?

Job shadowing is a type of experiential learning opportunity that involves observing a working professional throughout their typical work day. **Medical job shadowing** falls under the term clinical experience as it involves following and observing a physician, nurse, or other healthcare professional while they conduct their daily work activities in a clinical or hospital setting. Through medical job shadowing, students gain exposure to and learn about working conditions within the healthcare field.

Due to potential exposure to sensitive patient data or other confidential information, participating in a medical job shadow may require that you complete trainings or supply documentations such as a background check or other safety and security measures, first aid or cultural sensitivity training, or immunizations.

A majority of medical schools and healthcare professional programs require that undergraduate student applicants complete medical job shadowing hours prior to submitting their graduate program application. While the number of required hours vary for program admission, it is a general graduate school application requirement in order to ensure students have exposure to working in the healthcare field prior to committing to a lengthy graduate program. These required medical job shadowing hours do not have to be completed all at once. In fact, it is preferred that the hours are completed over time with multiple physicians or healthcare professionals. This is to expose students to the different methods and structure different healthcare settings utilize in patience care. While completing medical job shadowing hours, it is the student's responsibility to maintain a log in order to track the locations and total hours shadowed.

Journaling about shadowing experiences is also important. Students will participate in a variety of observation sessions during the undergraduate years and will draw on these experiences to write personal statements for medical school and professional school. Useful topics to reflect on include:
1. What you saw
2. What you learned
3. Insights gained from observation
4. How the experience helped clarify your decision to practice medicine.

Benefits of Job Shadowing:
- Determine if a career in the healthcare field is right for you
- Demonstrate your level of commitment to the healthcare field by gaining firsthand exposure and experience from a variety of healthcare professionals
- Learn about realistic aspects of the healthcare field such as working with patients, collaborating with other healthcare professionals, and the daily challenges and rewards of this profession
- Gain motivation and a better understanding of your specific career goals within the healthcare field
- Meet a healthcare professional who would be willing to mentor you and/or write a letter of recommendation for graduate school admission
- Complete the required hours to apply for medical school or healthcare professional programs
- Gather experiences to write about for personal statements when applying to graduate school

Steps to Obtaining a Medical Job Shadowing Opportunity

It is your responsibility as a student to initiate contact with healthcare professionals to inquire about a medical job shadowing opportunity.

1. **Conduct Outreach**
   - Create a list of different healthcare professions and/or medical specialties that interest you. Remain open-minded and consider including adjacent services or specialties. For example, consider shadowing a pharmacist as all healthcare professionals prescribe or administer medication.
     - Utilize current connections in your personal life, such as a family doctor, to begin conversations. Your family doctor may decline your request to job shadow, but may be able to share recommendations or make connections to other healthcare professionals.
     - Research hospitals and medical clinics near you to see if they have a preset shadowing program.
     - Consider connecting with health profession-related on-campus student organizations that may have a database of local healthcare professionals open to hosting students for medical job shadowing. A list of registered student organizations at FSU can be found here: https://nolecentral.dsa.fsu.edu/organizations
   - Send your request to the healthcare professional directly via email, phone or in-person to express your genuine interest in medical job shadowing and provide a copy of your résumé.
     - Be sure you have practiced and prepared your elevator pitch that explains why their medical or healthcare specialty aligns with your career goals or exploration. Helpful hints for preparing your elevator speech can be found in the following guide: Preparing for a Career Fair -

https://career.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/imported/storage/original/application/1ad1d4dc79aa076c74409d97c046deaf.pdf

- o Network for job shadow opportunities by getting involved in the healthcare field through volunteering at a hospital, hospice or nursing home, working as a phlebotomist, certified nursing assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT) or medical scribe, as well as getting involved with an on-campus healthcare-related student organization or pre-professional healthcare profession society.
    - Examples of other experience that qualifies: nurse (LPN, RN, BSN, NP, CRNA), patient care attendant, athletic trainer, physical therapist, respiratory therapist, x-ray technician, medical assistant, military medical technician/corpsman, international medical graduates, chiropractor, licensed massage therapist, optometrist and pharmacist.

2. **Arrange the Job Shadow Opportunity**
   - o Complete any required pre-paperwork and requested tasks before you show up to the job shadow, such as HIPAA training, background checks and proof of immunizations.
   - o Pre-arrange with the healthcare professional the length and specific schedule of your job shadow.
   - o Learn about the policies, regulations and preferences in place for job shadow participants at the site. For example, some healthcare professionals may welcome questions during interactions with patients while others expect total silence.
   - o Determine what the expected attire will be. For some healthcare settings, business attire with closed toed shoes is acceptable while others will expect scrubs and sneakers.
   - o Ask ahead of time if you can utilize a tablet or notepad to note observations.
   - o Identify if there will be time at the end of the job shadow for you to ask follow-up questions about your observations.

3. **Participate in the Job Shadow Opportunity**
   - o Come prepared to listen and observe in order to learn as much as possible from your medical job shadowing opportunity.
   - o Maintain a log detailing the dates, locations, medical professional name and specialty, as well as the total hours completed for each shadowing opportunity you complete.
   - o Consider participating in the Job Shadow Recognition Program to reflect on your experience. Additional details can be found at: https://career.fsu.edu/students/gain-experience/gain-recognition-for-your-experience/job-shadow-recognition-program

Making the Most of Your Experience
Tips
- Do your research ahead of time so that you are familiar with both the healthcare specialty and facility where you will be shadowing in in order to ask informed questions of the professionals.

- Review the [Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)](https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/security/laws-regulations/index.html) giving you an understanding of clinician-patient interaction privacy and confidentiality laws, https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/security/laws-regulations/index.html
- Be punctual.
- Be discreet and inconspicuous.
- Do not be offended if a patient declines your presence during their exam.
- When you conclude each medical job shadowing experience, send a [thank you note](#) to the healthcare professional. Make it personal and detail what you took away from the experience.
- If appropriate, request a letter of recommendation that you can keep on file for the graduate school application process.
- Shadowing is what you make of it and will be different based upon who or where you shadow since you are the one who controls expectations, thoughts and level of commitment.
- Go into your shadowing experience with an open mind, ready to learn and be inspired.
- If there is time between patients, consider asking the practitioner questions. Use the opportunity to show your passion and interest for the medical field.

Reflection Questions
- Can I see myself doing what this healthcare professional does on a daily basis?
- What are the pros and cons of this particular type of healthcare practitioner role?
    - Consider: size of practice (solo or group), types of patients (age, sex, problems/diagnoses, insurance), size of community, salaried or self-employed, paper charts or electronic medical records, hours and call schedule, family life, community service and/or influence, ability to practice in rural area or overseas
- Am I drawn to diagnostic problem solving or to procedures?
- Is the healthcare practitioner involved in clinical research or in "bench" (lab) research?
- How does the healthcare practitioner relate to his/her patients?
    - Consider: Formal or friendly approach, standing up or sitting down, rushed or not rushed, listening or interrupting, speaking with words that the patient can understand or speaking medical jargon or speaking in patient's primary language if it is not English
- How do I feel when there is no "cure" or treatment options?
- How do I feel about chronic problems compared with acute problems?
- How do I feel when I see patients who do not listen to advice or who do not take good care of their health?
- Did all patients with the same diagnosis seem the same? If not, how and why might they have been different from one another?
- Do I like situations in which a decision has to be made quickly?
- Do I like the pace of this type of healthcare setting?
- What did the healthcare practitioner do when s/he did not know the answer to something?

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Do you need to shadow in the direct field you want to be in?**
  - Yes, your shadowing experience should be consistent with your goal and graduate program application materials. If your shadowing is not consistent with your program application, an admissions committee may question your understanding of the field. However, you should first confirm your career goals by shadowing a variety of specialties to rule out other types of practice.
- **Does all my shadowing have to be completed prior to applying to a healthcare professional program?**
  - While all healthcare professional programs require evidence that you have explored the profession carefully, only some of them require a minimum number of medical job shadowing hours. Those that do require it may specify a minimum number of hours that must be completed prior to submitting your application. Make sure to check the websites for programs you are interested in for their specific admission requirements.
- **Should I shadow a more diverse selection of healthcare professionals before I submit my application?**
  - Not necessarily. If you find the healthcare professionals and healthcare setting you already shadowed appealing and consider it your confirmed career goal, then that medical job shadowing will suffice. If you want to consider something else, then you should try out other medical fields. Your experiences should be consistent with your current career goals.

Shadowing Resources

Florida State University:

- FSU Career Center http://career.fsu.edu/students/gain-experience/job-shadowing
- FSU Pre-Health Advising
  https://med.fsu.edu/index.cfm?page=AdvisingOutreach.premedOverview
- FSU College of Medicine Volunteer Opportunities
  https://med.fsu.edu/index.cfm?page=AdvisingOutreach.volunteer#international
- FSU Department of Psychology List of Experiences
  https://psy.fsu.edu/php/undergraduate/undergraduate.php?_tr=6
- FSU Department of Biological Science Internships
- https://www.bio.fsu.edu/undergrad/internships.php
- FSU College of Medicine List of Student Organizations
  https://med.fsu.edu/index.cfm?page=AdvisingOutreach.studentOrg
- FSU Recognized Student Organizations (RSO's)
  https://nolecentral.dsa.fsu.edu/organizations
- FSU Career Center's ProfessioNole Mentor program (Connect with Alumni and Friends)
  http://www.career.fsu.edu/professionole-mentors
- FSUshadow Program http://career.fsu.edu/students/fsushadow

Florida:
- Tallahassee Medical Resource Guide (Physician Listing)
  https://issuu.com/rowlandpublishing/docs/tpmrg_17-18_web
- Tallahassee Memorial Hospital https://www.tmh.org/careers/shadowing-and-observing
- American Red Cross http://www.redcross.org/local/florida/north-florida
- Big Bend Hospice https://www.bigbendhospice.org/volunteer/
- Boggy Creek Camps http://www.boggycreek.org/

National:
- Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/security/laws-regulations/index.html
- Scribe America: http://www.scribeamerica.com/how_to_apply.html
- Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP)
  http://www.shpep.org/about/
- Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP)
  http://www.shpep.org/site/university-of-florida/
- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) – How to shadow a doctor:
  https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/shadowing-doctor/

International:
- Child Family Health International https://www.cfhi.org/
- Amigos de las Americas http://www.amigoslink.org/
- Global Volunteer Network http://www.volunteer.org.nz/
- International Service Learning http://www.islonline.org/
- Visions in Action http://www.visionsinaction.org/
- Unite for Sight http://www.uniteforsight.org/
- Intern Abroad http://www.internabroad.com/
- Peace Corps https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/what-volunteers-do/#health