

# What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up? Pearls for Postresidency Planning



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Dermatology is an exciting and rewarding specialty. Looking for jobs after training can be a daunting task. From deciding to pursue a fellowship or a job in private practice, the opportunities are extensive. I have collected advice from recent dermatology graduates to help jump-start the planning process.

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**D**ermatology residency training can feel endless at the outset; an arduous intern year followed by 3 years of specialized training. However, I have realized that, within residency, time moves quickly. As I look ahead to postresidency life, I realize that residents are all facing the same question: What do you want to be when you grow up?

You may think you have answered that question already; however, there are many different careers within the field of dermatology and no amount of studying or reading will help you choose the right one. In an attempt to make sense of these choices, I have spoken to many recent dermatology graduates over the last several months to get a sense of how they made their postresidency decisions, and I want to share their pearls.

## **Pearl: Explore Fellowship Opportunities Early**

The first decision is whether or not to pursue a fellowship after residency. There currently are 2 Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education–approved fellowships after dermatology residency: dermatopathology and micrographic surgery. Pediatric dermatology is another board-certified fellowship. A list of these training programs and the requirements can be found on the American Board of Dermatology website ([www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org)). There also are several nonaccredited fellowships including pediatrics, cosmetics,

complex medical dermatology, cutaneous oncology, and rheumatology.

Even if you are not completely committed to pursuing a fellowship, it is beneficial to explore any fellowship options early in residency. Spend extra time in any field you are considering for fellowship and consider research in the field. If there is a fellowship position at your institution, try to rotate there early in residency. Rotations at other institutions can demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm while also helping you to network within your chosen subspecialty. Several of the dermatology interest groups even sponsor rotations at outside institutions, if extra funding is needed. If recent graduates from your program have matched in fellowship, it is always a good idea to reach out to them to get program-specific advice. It takes a lot of time, confidence, and persistence to organize the opportunities that will help you maximize your fellowship potential, but it is well worth the effort.

Fellowships can occur through an official “match,” similar to residency, or can be accepted on a rolling basis. For example, many dermatopathology fellowships can begin accepting applications as early as the summer between the first and second year of residency ([www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org)). It is important to get this information early so that you do not miss any application deadlines.

## **Pearl: Prioritize Where You Want to Practice**

If you have decided that fellowship is not for you, then it is time to apply for your first job as a physician. There are several big factors that help narrow the search. It is best to start the search early to allow yourself time and different options. According to the 2016 American Academy of Dermatology database, there currently are approximately 3.4 dermatologists per 100,000 Americans; however, they are unevenly distributed throughout the country. In

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this study, the researchers found the highest density of dermatologists on the Upper East Side of Manhattan (41.8 per 100,000 dermatologists) compared to Swainsboro, Georgia (0.45 per 100,000 dermatologists).<sup>1</sup>

With more competition for jobs in areas with a higher concentration of dermatologists, compensation often is lower. There also are many personal factors that contribute to where you want to live and work, and if you prioritize them, it will lead to greater overall satisfaction in postresidency life.

Another large factor to consider is private practice versus academic dermatology. Academic dermatology can provide opportunities for research as well as the opportunity to work with students and residents. As part of a larger hospital system, there often is the opportunity for benefits, such as 401(k) matching, that might be less accessible in small practices.

### **Pearl: Get Recruiter Recommendations From Your Peers**

There are many recruiting services that can help put you in touch with practices that are hiring. These services can be helpful but also can be overwhelming at times, with many emails and telephone calls. In my experience, recent graduates had mixed feelings about recruiting services. Those who had been the happiest with their recruiting experience had often gotten the name of a specific recruiter from someone else in their program who had a positive experience. Mentors at your training institution or beyond also can be a good source of information for job opportunities. It can be helpful to get involved early in the

various dermatologic societies and network at academic conferences throughout your training.

### **Pearl: Talk to Partners and Nonpartners About the Practice's Philosophy**

When picking a private practice for your first job, make sure you get a sense of the philosophy of the practice, including the partners' goals for the office, the patient population, and the dynamic of the office staff. If there is a cosmetic component, it is important to know what devices are available and which products are sold. It is important to talk to nonpartners at a practice and get a sense of their satisfaction. If you sign the employment contract, you will be in their shoes soon!

### **Pearl: Have an Attorney Review Your Contract**

There are many important topics in your employment contract. After years of medical school loans and resident salary, it is easy to focus only on compensation. However, pay attention to the other aspects of reimbursement including bonuses, benefits, noncompete clauses, and call schedules. Also consider the termination policies. The general advice I have received is to have a lawyer look at your contract. Although it may be tempting to skip the lawyer's fee and review it yourself, you may actually end up negotiating a contract that benefits you more in the long-run or avoid signing a contract that will limit you.

### **REFERENCE**

1. Glazer AM, Farberg AS, Winkelmann RR, et al. Analysis of trends in geographic distribution and density of US dermatologists. *JAMA Dermatol.* 2017;153:322-325.