



THE NEW PODIATRIC PRACTITIONER

Congratulations!

You have taken your first steps on the footpath of your chosen profession: **podiatric medicine**.

You have the education, now you need the experience!

CPMA is here for you every step of the way.

Your Membership Services Committee has compiled this guide in hopes that it will aid you in your next big step: finding employment! Or if you have found it, to provide information to help you navigate your new career.

This guide will introduce you to various aspects of job hunting and interviewing, types of practices, hospital and other issues to consider when starting out. We hope you find it useful!

PRIORITIES

There are three main priorities most doctors think about when trying to find a job:

- 1) Location
- 2) Type of Practice
- 3) Money

These must be considered - and not necessarily in this order - when looking for a job. No job will be a perfect fit, but it helps to prioritize what is important to you.

1. LOCATION

Things to consider:

- Reimbursements vary by region, so be aware of that.
- Where do you REALLY want to live? Is it okay to settle for less pay to be able to live where you want? Or would the commute be worth it if you worked in one region and lived in another?
- Be careful about living *too* close to work. Although there are obvious benefits of living close to the office, you may find yourself being called in during bad weather or other emergencies just because you live closer.

- Does the cost of living match the level of your salary, or are you willing to settle for less? Are taxes particularly high?
- Ask other doctors where the best place to live may be. Where are the best schools?
- Beware of buying a home too early. Make sure you like your job. Especially if you go to an area with a high attrition of doctors, you may want to rent for the first couple of years.

2. PRACTICE TYPES

- **Academics:** Make sure the job you take offers enough time from clinical practice to pursue research. Most academic practices do require clinical work, so make sure that is spelled out in your contract.
- **Group Practice:** Most group practices are looking for a certain expertise. It could be ankle reconstruction, Charcot reconstruction, wound care, vascular, general podiatry, or C&C. Make sure you ask what the group is looking for in a podiatric physician. If you are interested in rearfoot surgery and want to become certified, make sure that this is what the group can offer and support.
- **Private Practice:** This may be time consuming and slow to begin with, but one who owns their own practice has pride of ownership and can mold it to be what they want their practice to be rather than conforming to others' wishes and demands. However, that also means that you would be responsible 24/7. Make sure you know your fellow private practitioners in the area so they can support you should you get ill or want to take a vacation.

3. MONEY:

There are websites that explain salaries by region. Typically, surgical podiatrists make more than general podiatrists in group practices while academic podiatrists make less than the others. Due to changes in health care it is difficult to say if the private practitioner vs. the group podiatrist is doing better. Time will tell.

THE JOB INTERVIEW

- It is usually best to start with a phone call, however, in today's job market most applications require that you submit your cover letter and CV via email. Please refer to books on how best to construct these items. The phone call is helpful and encouraged, as it puts a voice to your application.
- This is usually an interview with other doctors, however if you interview with an HMO there is a possibility that a non-medical person will also interview you.
- Be certain to dress professionally (no scrubs).
- Get there ahead of time and be well rested. Plan your wardrobe and travel route ahead of time and leave early enough to allow for traffic.
- Most jobs will pay your interview expenses. Some will reimburse your expenses only if they hire you.
- Be respectful of what you say since this is a tight knit profession and you want to leave them with a positive impression of you, not fodder for gossip around the water cooler or at meetings.
- Do not use medical jargon when talking to non-medical personnel.
- Don't be confrontational or demanding.

- Be honest about what you can and cannot do. No doctor knows everything.
- Ask what they are looking for regarding skills, interests, expertise and procedures.
- Beware of being told that they will train you to do something, especially if you are not interested in that particular skill. You may end up being the “expert” for your group or hospital doing something you really do not like, or taking too much call as the only person with that specialty.
- Ask about practice style. How does a typical day run? What are you expected to do?
- Ask about the location, the hospital, the other entertainments or industry of the town, and other practices and hospitals in the area and how they affect the practice.
- Observe the staff and the environment. Is it a friendly place to work? Is it run efficiently? Is the hospital and clinic clean and kept up, or old and run down?
- What services are offered to support the practice? Are there other specialties around? Are there MRIs and CTs and are they up-to-date? Are there vascular surgeons and interventional radiologists, and if so, what types of procedures do they do?
- You may want to go to an academic location because a certain desirable mentor is there. Just be aware that they move around, too, so make sure you are happy to be there for other reasons as well.
- Check the reputation of the group or hospital with the State, the insurance commissioner, and JACHO to make sure the hospital has not been sanctioned.
- If people have left the practice, find out why by talking to them. It may turn out that you may be a better fit than they were, and knowing the reasons may help you make things better (or know to look for employment opportunities elsewhere).
- Is the location unionized? Have there been strikes? How has this affected service? Is there a special partnership agreement between the staff and the partners?
- Are there restrictions as to where you can admit patients? Have privileges been denied? Sometime privileges are denied for competitive reasons.
- What are the fortes of the other doctors you will be working with?
- Does the practice pay for malpractice insurance, licensing fees, Association dues, etc.?
- Do they pay for continuing educational programs or education leave days?
- Do they offer medical or dental insurance, pensions, or retirement insurance? (Some companies send you this information up-front prior to your interview.) Consider the benefits offered in addition to the salary.

CONTRACT QUESTIONS

- How much call? What happens if you are sick? Be aware that some groups do not require call after a certain age—so how will that affect the practice’s call coverage and your contract?
- What happens if you or someone in your practice is the ONLY one specialized in doing a certain procedure such as Charcot reconstruction, and no one else has the expertise? Who covers call, and what happens should a problem occur when the specialist is out? This has legal, ethical and scope ramifications that must be decided and are not easily solved.

PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONS

An attorney is best to review partnership offers, so please use one. Not all partnerships are good or are in your best interest. Typically, partnership means you own a piece of the company or the partnership, but with that comes liability, as profits and losses are shared by the partners. That is why many doctors form corporations to limit the liability of the partners. Recently, Limited Liability Corporations have become en vogue because they have tax protection while having limited liability.

Just because you are a partner does not mean that you cannot be fired. All contracts typically have clauses for termination.

Consult an attorney regarding the structure of the group you are joining, as there may be legal and financial considerations.

- What does the partnership offer? Is it just voting rights, and if so, how many partners are there, and do you really have a voice? Are there restrictions for the younger partners compared to the older partners? Are you better off as an employee rather than as a partner?
- Is there a buy-in to join the group, such as, must you pay for the buildings or equipment? When you leave the group, do you get a certain percentage of the money back?

INCOME AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Salary and bonuses are not usually discussed at the first interview and are often left for the secondary interview.
- Besides salary and bonuses, inquire whether there are other stipends for extra work, such as carrying the pager, or taking call?
- Some places have arrangements to guarantee a steady income in the form of a loan to help pay for office and staff.
- If you volunteer to sit on a committee you may be able to ask for extra compensation. However, be careful as Stark Laws may make that questionable. Make sure an attorney signs off on that. The Stark Laws govern kickbacks, so this can be misconstrued.
- Liability and malpractice insurance is typically required by the hospital or the group. Most offer it as part of the contract if you join a group. Also, if you leave one company to join another, you should consider getting tail coverage. Some companies pay for this coverage, and others do not.
- Worker's Compensation Insurance is required by the state for your staff if you are in any private or group practice.
- You must have a working knowledge of billing and coding. If someone else does your billing service, please be aware that you are ultimately responsible for the billing.
- Attend billing and coding courses and lectures presented at The Western Foot and Ankle Conference or other meetings. Make use of the APMA Coding Resource Center.
- In an HMO setting the contract will have your billing assigned to the HMO using your provider number, but you are still responsible for the billing.
- There are many laws in place that doctors may find cumbersome in private practice, i.e., the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that one is aware of protecting patients' information and their confidentiality. Make allowances for this if you choose to go this route.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

- **Credentialing** is a process to document that you are who you state you are with the training and license you claim to have. **Privileging** is the process where the hospital awards you the privilege to practice in a certain fashion. For podiatric physicians, this means that someone will proctor you for so many surgical and ambulatory cases. Both processes require time to accomplish.
- Medical License: Each state has a board that issues the license. In California, it is the Board of Podiatric Medicine. **[Watch this YouTube video explaining the process to become a resident podiatrist in California.](#)** **It will explain the forms you will need to fill out as well as give you a check-list of items needed for obtaining one's license.** You must maintain your license by complying with the renewal process, or you will lose it. In some states they have a list of doctors who have lost their licenses, but they do not necessarily make a distinction between those who have chosen not to renew versus those who lost it for ethical or clinical issues. It is hard to get various state licenses, so it is advised to hold onto licenses once you have obtained them. It is helpful should you ever desire to become a locum. Various states now have requirements not only for CMEs, but also for special training in child-elder abuse, cultural competency, LGBT sensitivity, and geriatrics in order to maintain a license.
- When applying for a job the application asks for your medical license, malpractice carrier, malpractice history, DEA numbers, MediCare numbers, hospital affiliations, specialty training, BLS/ACLS, and other training.
- Every state you apply to requires your National Board scores, so verify these.
- Certain health care regulations require contracts including HMOs. Consult CPMA's Legal Counsel if you need help.

MORE TIPS

Find a mentor! Go to local society meetings and put yourself out there! Engaging your colleagues may lead to even better opportunities and will enhance your sense of camaraderie and community both locally and within the profession.

Take advantage of the *APMA Career Center*! Find your dream job or be your own boss.

Go to: <https://www.apma.org/CareerCenter/>

Check listings in the *California Podiatric Physician* or *APMA News* for practices for sale or other classifieds that may help enrich your practice.

Keep in touch with CPMA! Make sure CPMA has your updated email to get alerts and important news about your profession delivered to your inbox.

Also, keep CPMA updated with your home and office addresses – we need your home address to do your legislation, and we need your mailing address so patients can find you on your free mini website at calpma.org!

And lastly...

TALK TO A LAWYER.

THE CPMA LEGAL DEPARTMENT IS AVAILABLE TO ASSIST.

CALL THE CPMA HELP LINE FOR ANY LEGAL NEEDS AT (800) 794-8988

OR

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