

# Life After Residency

A Career Planning Guide

Melissa T. Berhow  
William W. Feaster  
John G. Brock-Utne

*Second Edition*



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ISBN 978-3-030-93373-9      ISBN 978-3-030-93374-6 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93374-6>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*We would like to dedicate this book to our families who are routinely asked to give up extraordinary amounts of their time as we pursue various clinical and academic activities, such as writing this book, while actively practicing medicine.*

*Melissa Berhow: To my son Logan, who makes it all right in the world.*

*William Feaster: To my wife Sandi, who tolerated 40 years of new houses and jobs while I pursued my various clinical, administrative, and academic careers, as well as an MBA along the way.*

*John G. Brock-Utne: To my wife Sue for her 55 years of loving support and companionship as we journey through life, while working on three continents. Also, to the next generation, our six grandchildren, Matthew, Toby, Anders, Jasper, Stefan, and Charlotte.*

*We would also like to dedicate this book to all the residents and fellows of the Department of Anesthesia at Stanford University. Their many suggestions/questions vastly improved our Career Transition Workshop. As mentioned in the preface, these workshops provided the impetus for this book. We strongly believe that these topics are incredibly important topics for your whole family and yourself as you look to a life after residency.*

# Preface

The first edition of this book was inspired by the questions and needs of our residents in the Stanford Department of Anesthesiology, Peri-operative & Pain Medicine at Stanford University Medical Center, Stanford, California. They have continued to inspire us, hence a second edition. In addition to updating the information from the original 11 chapters, we have added three new chapters for three distinct sections. These new chapters expand the focus of the book beyond the “transition” period into the “maintenance” period and a glimpse into life beyond medicine.

## Part I: Navigating the Initial Transition

After more than 4 years of medical school, more than 3 years of residency, and, possibly, an additional sub-specialty fellowship, you are finally ready to find a real job. You have an exciting and challenging task ahead of you! In the chapters that follow, we will provide you with the knowledge you need to locate and secure a job that is best suited to your practice goals, successfully begin your new practice, and begin to manage your increasing income to your best advantage. The first step in the process is to determine what type of practice best fits your long-term goals. A key part of this decision will include the location you chose for this practice. Chapter 1 will help you narrow your decisions. The next step is getting together a couple of key documents you will need when you approach prospective employers. The first is an appropriate curriculum vitae (CV) which outlines the details of your training and job experience. Accompanying your CV is usually a cover letter that describes your specific interests in the practice you are targeting. Chapter 2 will help you prepare both of these documents. You will then need to identify practice opportunities in your targeted locale. You may want to start this search at least 1 year prior to finishing training. Chapter 3 will get you started with some suggestions on how to perform this search. Once you make your contacts with available practices, and potential employers are interested in you, you will often arrange for an on-site interview. Preparing for this interview is critical: you need to know what questions to ask

and what questions will likely be asked of you. Chapter 4 will assist you in your preparation. If you receive a job offer, how do you properly evaluate it and compare it to other offers that you receive? What can be negotiated further? How do you assess the differences between various groups, buy-in opportunities, salaries, and benefits? Do you need an attorney to review the various documents you are provided? Chapter 5 will guide you in this evaluation.

## **Part II: Setting Up Shop for the First Time**

Once you've found your job, negotiated your best offer, accepted that offer, and have set a date to begin practice, you'll need to attend to several other important matters. First, you'll have to apply for membership onto medical staffs where you'll be practicing. That's not a simple task, as described in Chapter 6. Obtaining and maintaining the proper state license is another important matter covered in Chapter 7. You'll also need to obtain malpractice insurance prior to starting your practice. The major types of malpractice insurance and the important issues associated with them are discussed in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 is a valuable tool to help you manage your finances now that you are finally earning a practicing physician's income. This is a treacherous task with sharks circling, looking to take a large bite out of unsuspecting newly minted physicians' wallets. You also have some key financial tasks and decisions to make, including paying off student loans, buying a house, and investing for your eventual retirement. Bad decisions in any of these areas can be very costly in the long run.

Chapter 10 covers the powers and pitfalls of social media. Social media started as a means to connect at a personal level but has also proven to be a very effective professional tool. This tool, however, can be a double-edged sword. When the lines between personal and professional blur, there can be significant ramifications. Sometimes the obstacles in your path are simply bumps in the road and sometimes they are massive mountains to climb. Chapter 11 provides a starting point for navigating the bigger challenges including taking time off to care for a loved one, cause majeure, and termination from your job.

## **Part III: It's a Marathon Not a Sprint: Sustainability and Relevance for Your Career and Life**

It is not just about sustaining a career but being the best you can be for the long haul. Critical to being the best "you" and minimizing burn-out is being mindful of your own well-being (Chapter 14). Chapter 12 tells you about how you can have an effective voice in the hospital decision-making process to the benefit of the patients and all healthcare providers.

And finally, after all this training, some physicians want to look for a career outside of medicine, either to augment a clinical practice or to do something entirely different. Chapter 13 gives you some advice for non-medical career options.

So, get started with the task ahead of finding your first real job as a physician. It is one of the most exciting times of your career, and, often, one of the tasks we least prepare you for in postgraduate education.

Hopefully this book will help you succeed with this task. We wish you luck as you now move to your next step in a hopefully long and successful carrier as a medical doctor.

Stanford, CA, USA  
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# Acknowledgments

We acknowledge our hundreds of residents and fellows at the Stanford University Medical Center, Stanford, CA 94305, USA, and other programs we've been associated with as the true inspiration for writing this book.

We also want to express our gratitude to Roya Saffary, MD, for her writing on social media (Chapter 10); James McAvoy, MD, for his contributions to Chapter 7 on medical licensing; and Sandra Feaster, RN, for expert input to our final chapter on physician wellness.

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