

Landing the Right First Job: Start With a Plan

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Finishing fellowship and deciding on your next career move is an exciting but scary time. Finally all of the work you've put into your college and medical school efforts and the sacrifices you've made to become a cardiologist are coming to an end – you're going to finally get to do what you've been dreaming about for years! It's important at this time to think about more than just the increase in income after fellowship. You'll need to have developed a plan that will allow you to land a job that will fulfill you personally and professionally and satisfy your family as well.

others the quality of the job will be the determining factor. The reality is that finding the exact job you want in the place you most want to live is impossible for most of us. Deciding what a community must have (and what, in some cases, it must not have) is a good start. Take into consideration proximity to family, nearness to large cities, climate, schools, lifestyle issues, recreation options, and housing.

Major consideration must be given to the needs of your spouse. One of the primary reasons cardiologists leave their first job is dissatisfaction of a husband or wife with their new community or the job opportunities available for them. It's critical that you keep your spouse's needs on par with yours – if he or she is not happy, you won't be either.

Decide also what the “must haves” and what the “deal breakers” are before agreeing to interview for a job. The following list is a good place to start:

- Minimum compensation you'll accept
- Call schedule
- Time off for:
 - Vacation
 - CME
- Time to partnership
- Buy-in for partnership
- Size of the group
- Ancillary support (independent licensing professionals, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants)

Once you do start talking to a group (or their recruiter) there are several things to keep in mind:

- What is the history of the group?
- How long has it been together?
- Was it always one group, or was it formed by a merger of two or more groups?
- What is the age range of the current partners?
- How many of the current cardiologists are employed, and how many are partners?
- What has the turnover of the group been? Do they have a history of hiring physicians and then not offering partnership at the end of the employment contract?
- What is the reputation of the group in the community and among other physicians not associated with the group?
- Is there a teaching program at the hospital? If so, are you able or expected to teach? Does




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Since this is such a crucial time you should plan to think methodically. This means defining your needs and evaluating pros and cons of options by writing them down. Nothing makes decision making easier than seeing the choices in front of you.

The first and most obvious thing to decide is whether you want to stay in academics or go into private practice. This article will not focus on the difference between the two, as not only does there tend to be overlap between academics and private practice for many cardiologists, but there is great variability depending on the setting.

Deciding whether location is important is a pivotal first step. For many this is easy: family, personal obligations, or individual desires will dictate this. For



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It may be time consuming to find answers to many of these questions, but the effort will be well worthwhile – if you do end up joining the group you’ll find out anyway – and these are things that you’re better off knowing up front.

The more specific you can be in defining the parameters of the job you want, the more satisfied you will be with it. While this may require quite a bit of soul searching and long discussions with family, and may actually limit the number of opportunities you choose to pursue, your reward will be a job that meets and exceeds your expectations, both personally and professionally.

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the program include medical students, residents in family practice, internal medicine, or cardiology fellows?

- Is this a single-specialty cardiology group or part of a multispecialty clinic?
- Does the group have (or plan to have) availability of all of the subspecialists you would like to work with?
- If you are a subspecialist, does the group already have someone doing what you’re expecting to do, or will you be developing this field for them?
- Is the equipment in the office/clinic owned by the practice?
- Do they work out of one hospital or travel to two or more?
- How many clinics do they staff? If it is more than one, how close is it? And how often will you be expected to be on the road?
- What is the culture of the group? Do they share your values for patient care and respect one another? Do the physicians in the group have a strictly business relationship, or do they truly value and admire one another? This is perhaps the most important question of all.