

Things I Wish I Had Known

ACFP FFYFP Committee
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Faculty/Presenter Disclosure

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FFYFP Jeopardy

| Locums | Starting a practice | Financial Management | Work/Life Balance | FAQs | Transition to practice |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <u>How to find a locum</u> | <u>Identifying career goals</u> | <u>Billing</u> | <u>Dealing with medial error</u> | <u>Clinical resources</u> | <u>Exams</u> |
| <u>Red flags (what to watch out for)</u> | <u>Taking on patients</u> | <u>Incorporation</u> | <u>Time management</u> | <u>Workplace issues</u> | <u>Registration and privileging</u> |
| <u>Negotiating a contract</u> | <u>Staffing issues</u> | <u>Business costs</u> | <u>Parental leave</u> | <u>Medicolegal tips</u> | <u>AHW and WCB Billing</u> |
| <u>Tips & Tricks</u> | <u>How to choose a practice</u> | <u>Accounting</u> | <u>Mentorship</u> | <u>FFYFP!</u> | <u>CMPA</u> |

Identifying Career Goals

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you want to work in a solo or group practice?
- How important is location to you?
- What patient population do you want to work with?
- How do you want to be paid?
- How many days do you want to work?
- Do you want to teach?
- What procedures do you want to be able to do?
- What are your income aspirations?

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How to Choose a Practice?

- Assuming a practice:
 - Pros: established staff and equipment, steady income, patient profiles set up, less M&Gs
 - Cons: significant differences in practice styles and policies, staff attrition, too large a roster, more complex patients
- Starting your own practice:
 - Pros: can set own expectations for staff and patients, build roster as you feel comfortable
 - Cons: investing time in registering and setting up patient profiles, less stable income initially

How to Choose a Practice cont'd

Questions to ask the practice:

- Evaluate your potential long-term partners
- How are decisions made within the practice?
- How are you paid?
- What are the overhead costs?
- Access to allied health staff
- How much flexibility is there with the schedule?
- How does vacation coverage work?
- What are the office policies?
- What equipment/EMR is available? Is everything up to “code”?
- Is there a partnership agreement?
- Take a tour! Do you feel comfortable with the set-up?

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Taking on Patients

How to recruit patients to your practice:

- contact your local PCN!
- check out calgaryareadocs.com
- contact local walk-in clinics

How many patients?

- Varies depending on patient demographics
- Can be anywhere from 100-250/half day clinic
- Using measures like third next available appointment can be helpful
- Check out this AAFP article on panel size :
<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2007/0400/p44.html>

The Meet and Greet

Tips for the Meet and Greet:

- Ask why are they changing doctors
- Orient patient to office hours and after hour coverage, appointment bookings, and office policies, including non-insured services and no show fees
- Address specific prescribing policies (eg. Opioids)
- Discuss allied health staff resources available
- Discuss expectations (both ways!)
- Consider having a patient handout
 - Check out CMA's *Starting Your Practice on the Right Foot* module <https://www.cma.ca/Assets/assets-library/document/en/practice-management-and-wellness/MEDED-12-00307-PMC-Module-12-e.pdf>

Staffing Issues

- Discuss with your practice partners how staffing is managed in the practice
- Consider hiring an office manager
- Decide what you want your staff to help you with
- Probationary period for new staff
- Clear employment contracts
- Regular performance evaluations for staff
- Have clear policies about vacation, benefits, salary

Exams

- CCFP exam: register at www.cfpc.ca/FMExam
 - Can sit in the final 6 mo of residency
 - PRACTICE SOOs!!
 - 99 core topics are a good resource
- LMCC exam: register at physiciansapply.ca
 - Can sit after 12 mo of residency
 - Practice talking through physical examination

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Registration and Privileging

- Check out the [FFYFP website](#) for lots of information and links!!
- Get started on clinical privileges EARLY
- Register through the CPSA
 - Can start the process 6 mo before graduation
 - Allow at least 90 days
 - Will need 3 references and a notarized copy of your medical degree

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Billing

- Need to sign up for a PRAC-ID # in order to bill Alberta Health and Wellness
 - You need your CPSA number to do this
- Also sign up for a Business Arrangement (BA) number
- THEN: sign up for a WCB number (you will need your PRAC-ID and CPSA #'s for this)

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CMPA

- Will need to register for a CMPA number in order to have privileges and work within AHS
- Remember to notify the CMPA if you change provinces or scope of practice
- Partial reimbursement of medical liability fees is available through the AMA

How to Find a Locum

- Various websites with locum postings and information, see the ‘finding a job’ section on our FFYFP toolkit page
 - <https://www.acfp.ca/membership/first-five-years/toolkit/>
- Word of mouth is also important, talk to current or former preceptors, colleagues
- If there is a specific place you are interested in – ask, let them know you are available and when

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Red Flags (What to Watch Out For)

- Know what you are getting into, beware if this information is not readily provided
 - Understand your remuneration, overhead, billing support, staffing support, EMR vs. paper)
 - Ask if there are specific expectations around volume and what a typical work day should like
 - Ask what you are expected to cover (clinic, inpatient, obstetrical care, ER shifts, other on-call responsibilities) and ensure you are comfortable with the terms, also find out if there is back-up support available
 - Ask about what the demographics of the practice setting are (young families, chronic diseases, chronic pain patients – will you need a triplicate and what are expectations regarding refilling narcotic scripts).
- Ask others for advice
 - Talk to colleagues, former preceptors to see what is reasonable for overhead in a specific community, how support staff are structured in other clinics
- Know what medical services are available in the community and how to access them
 - Is there specialist support available, how do you refer, is there multi-disciplinary support in the clinic or community
- For a longer term locum or a possible transition into ongoing practice, is the location a fit for you
 - Can you commute or find a place to reside there, does the area have services that you are interested in (fitness centre, theatre, schools for kids, ice-cream parlour, etc).

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Negotiating a Contract

- Get the terms of the locum position in writing
- Consider the aspects from the 'What to Watch Out For' slide
 - Overhead, staff and billing support, other coverage and call responsibilities should be delineated from the beginning
 - Clarify if there are specific workload expectations for patient volume, hours, call responsibilities, etc.
- Does not have to be complex, especially for a short term locum, but it should outline exactly what to expect
- When in doubt, have a lawyer review

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Tips and Tricks

- Ask around and check online to find opportunities
- Ask for advice to know that a locum opportunity is fair and will serve your needs
- Ensure you understand all terms of the locum including the setting, staffing, workload expectations, other coverage responsibilities
- The CMA's 'New In Practice' Guide has lots of information about transitioning into practice including a various considerations for locum positions and a checklist of things to consider for a long term practice opportunity

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Dealing With Medical Error

- Physicians are human, errors can happen, recognize and accept this
- Errors can occur at many levels – physician, staff, miscommunications (with patient or with staff regarding patient care), patient understanding of care plan, pharmacy
- When an error is recognized to have occurred, be willing to discuss it with the patient
- Colleagues can provide advice and support
- Always feel free to call the CMPA for advice

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Time Management

- An important but often difficult skill to master
- Patient care is not just the time to see patients – paperwork, charting, referrals, investigation and result follow-up, billing all need time
- Plan time in your day to account for all of this indirect patient care you need to do
- The unexpected can happen – a patient is unwell and needs immediate care coordination, a patient has needs more complex than you expected, staff call in sick – not everything can be planned, consider building some catch up time in your day, particularly when you are just starting out

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Parental Leave

- Physicians are generally in a self-employed status, even when working in a hospital or in an alternate funding model
- The AMA provides a parental leave benefit of \$1051 per week for up to 17 consecutive weeks
 - When both parents are physicians, each may be eligible for this leave taken concurrently or consecutively
 - See the AMA parental leave program webpage for full details: <https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/programs/parental-leave-program>
- Considerations for coverage of practice (colleague coverage, locum coverage) will need to be made
- Do not underestimate the benefits of time spent with your newborn - they are only little once

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Mentorship

- Informal and formal mentorship
- Informal most prominent, through training and early career, identify those you are comfortable going to for advice, use them when you need to make decisions.
- Some communities and practices will describe mentorship that is available for new graduates
- Expect to see more formal mentorship programs in the coming years

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Billing

- When first starting out in practice, the billing system can be daunting, especially when moving from outside Alberta
- The AMA offers multiple resources to assist with navigating the Alberta Billing system:
 - AMA Fee Navigator
 - Schedule of Medical Benefits (SOMB)
 - Access to Online Billing Advice
 - Access to Billing tips
 - Access to Billing seminars
- <https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help>

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Incorporation

- Most physicians who incorporate their practice do so primarily for the tax advantages
- The biggest question often is *“When is the right time?”*
<https://youtu.be/mS1DRiY7y48>
- Get personalized advice – talk to an MD Financial Advisor to weigh the benefits with the complexities and associated
- Check out MD Management Wealth Management Strategies
 - <https://mdm.ca/wealth-management/incorporation/benefits-and-opportunities/>

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Business Costs

- There are countless unforeseen expenses that pop up on a daily basis
- Be sure to not make rash decisions, and instead try to create a budget and rationalize purchases with colleagues before committing to large purchases
- Be organized – make spreadsheets of all associated business expenses so that when tax time comes, you aren't scrambling.

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Accounting

- When choosing an accountant, finding someone you can trust is essential
- Word of mouth is often the best means of finding a trustworthy accountant who is well-versed in managing the complexities of a medical practice

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Clinical Resources

- There are countless clinical resources available
- Taking the time to familiarize yourself with some of the Canada/Alberta specific ones can be practice-changing
- Below are a few:
 - Towards Optimized Practice (TOP Guidelines)
 - Canadian Pediatrics Society Caring for Kids (Parent Resources)
 - Immunize.ca
 - Cardiovascular Risk Calculator (Mike Allan and Michael Kolber – Tools for Practice Group)
 - <http://chd.bestsciencemedicine.com/calc2.html>

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Workplace Issues

- If conflicts arise in the workplace, be sure to address them early on rather than letting the issue fester and develop into something bigger
- Utilize the CMPA as needed if workplace conflicts involve medico-legal dilemmas
- Conflict resolution courses are available

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Medicolegal Tips

- Utilize the resources through the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) if ever faced with a medicolegal dilemma
www.cmpa-acpm.ca/home
- A request for Medico-legal assistance can be done online through the CMPA website or via phone
- Common reasons to request assistance from the CMPA:
 - A College complaint
 - A hospital complaint
 - An inquest notice
 - A lawyer's letter
 - A Notice of Action/Writ of Summons
 - A Statement of Claim
 - Another legal matter such as when you receive a document from
 - a patient
 - the Court
 - the Human Rights Commission or
 - the Privacy Commissioner

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FFYFP

- Check us out!

- Website:

- <https://www.acfp.ca/membership/first-five-years/>

- Twitter:

- [@ABFirst5](#)

- Facebook:

- [First 5 Years in Family Practice - Alberta](#)

- Oh my blog:

- <https://www.acfp.ca/reflections-on-my-first-five-years-in-family-practice/>