

Shadowing and Observing Healthcare Environments

Volunteering vs. Shadowing

Clinical Volunteering

- Helping/participating in a clinical setting
- Primarily benefits others
- May lead to shadowing

Shadowing

- Observing healthcare provider*- patient interactions
- Primarily benefits the shadow
- May lead to mentoring

**Healthcare provider can refer to physicians, nurses, physician assistants, therapists, etc.*

Why Shadow/Observe?

- Gain first-hand knowledge and experience about the career in your interest field
- Clarify and validate initial impressions
- Understand the realities/limitations of healthcare
- Test level of commitment to the responsibilities of the position
- Discover aspects of the career that you might enjoy and other aspects that might be challenging
- Improve articulation of motivation, interest and/or goals of pursuing the particular profession

Shadowing Reflection Questions

- Can I see myself doing what this healthcare provider does on a daily basis?
- Can I see myself as a colleague in this environment/field?
- What are the joys and frustrations of this career?
- How does the provider learn more about his/her patient's personal lives?
 - How does this knowledge benefit the patient's care?
- Do I like the pace of this type of practice?
- What are the pros and cons of this particular type of healthcare setting/profession?
 - Size of practice
 - Types of patients
 - Size of community
 - Salaried or self-employed
 - Hours and call schedule
 - Ability/ease of creating and maintaining a personal life outside of work
 - Community service and/or influence
 - Ability to practice in urban, rural area or country outside of the US
- How are problems solved in this profession? What type of problems are presented?
- How do I feel when there is no "cure" or treatment options?
- What did the individual do when s/he didn't know the answer to something?
- Is the individual involved in "bench" (lab) or clinical research?
- Do I like situations in which a decision has to be made quickly?
- Am I drawn to the procedures that occur in this profession/specialty practice?
- How do I feel about chronic problems compared with acute problems?
- How do I feel when I see patients who don't listen to advice or who don't take good care of their health?
- How does the provider relate to his/her patients?
 - Formal or friendly approach
 - Standing up or sitting down?
 - Speaking in medical jargon or in words the patient can understand?
 - Rushed or not rushed?
 - Listening or interrupting?
- What factors seem to play into how the patients respond to the provider?
- Did all patients with the same diagnosis seem the same?
 - If not, how and why might they have been different from one another?