

# Questions to Ask About Specialties

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## Questions to ask yourself

- What do I enjoy doing?
- What is important to me?
- What energizes me?
- What do I do well?
- Where do I feel most at home?
- What made me want to practice medicine in the first place?

## *Do I value...*

- Autonomy
- Continuity of care
- Innovative thinking
- Intellectual challenge
- Pressure
- Responsibility
- Sense of accomplishment

## Nature of the work

- What systems, diseases, patient types, and procedures are part of this specialty?
- What kind of relationships do physicians in these specialties have with their patients?
- Do they work with a variety of common medical problems, or singular, specialized problems?
- In what settings are these specialties practiced?
- Do they regularly work with consultants, referral specialists or allied health professionals?
- Does the work involve regular manual or mechanical activities?
- Does the work involve an intellectual component?

## Characteristics of physicians in the specialty

- What values, interests, skills, and personality types are common to physicians in this specialty?
- Is this field diverse in ways that matter to me?
- Training/Residency requirements
- How long is the training for this career path?
- How competitive is this option, and can I compete (grades, USMLE scores, etc.)?
- What are the options for fellowship or subspecialty training?

## Lifestyle and salary

- What is the average number of work hours per week?
- What is the on-call schedule like?
- What can I expect in terms of salary?

## **Issues facing professionals in the field**

- What are the hot topics?
- What research questions are being studied?
- How interesting are these issues to me?
- Is there an expectation of growth or decline in the need for physicians in this specialty area?

## **Questions to ask a specialist**

- How / why did you choose this specialty?
- What do you find most rewarding about your work?
- What are the biggest challenges?
- How much balance do you have between your career and personal life?
- What attributes are important in anyone considering this specialty?
- Knowing what you do now, would you choose this specialty again?