

Finding a Job (Heather Moss, Stacy Pineles & Nicholas Volpe)

I'm Heather Moss from the University of Illinois at Chicago and I'm sharing

Training is (almost) over! While procuring your first "real job" is exciting, the task can be a daunting and frustrating one. Our advice is to start early and keep an open mind. The biggest challenge is finding possible positions, which are constantly in flux and not always advertised.

1. BE INTROSPECTIVE: Before you start your search in earnest, contemplate what you bring to the table so that you can look for a good match and sell yourself. Patient care can come in specialty, general, inpatient and outpatient flavors. Research can be basic or clinical. In academics there is the possibility of educating fellows, residents and medical students. Administration is typically not a big part of a first job, but it is worth noting if this is an interest or a talent.

Simultaneously, contemplate what your job priorities are including environment (academic, private, hybrid), balance of responsibilities (clinical, education, administration, research), geography, time frame for starting employment, salary and other factors (e.g. job for significant other). Helpful salary resources are surveys published by NANOS and AAMC.

2. ASSEMBLE YOUR "APPLICATION": The foundation is a CV with accurate and complete information that reflects your talents and achievements. Be sure to include contact information and save it in an easily opened format such as PDF. Also draft a cover letter that includes contact information, job objectives (short term), career objectives (long term) and highlights from your CV. Referees/letters of recommendation won't be needed initially, but it is good to choose who you will ask and confirm their willingness to write/speak positively on your behalf in advance. It may be requested that you give a talk during interview visits and it is worth thinking about possible topics in advance.

3. LOOK FOR POSITIONS: This is an ongoing process, so keep your eyes and ears open. Review job postings through professional organizations (NANOS, AAO, AAN) and listings at the back of journals. Ask your mentors if they know of anyone who is/might be looking for someone with your talents. Ask recently employed neuro-ophthalmologists where they had leads/offers that they didn't pursue. Finally prepare for cold-calls (e-mails) by assembling contact information for neuro-ophthalmologists, multi-specialty practice groups, ophthalmology and/or neurology practices and chairpersons of academic neurology and/or ophthalmology departments in your geographic areas of interest. Think broadly and don't limit yourself!

4. REACH OUT: This is straightforward for advertised positions – follow the application instructions. If you are following another lead or cold-calling, compose a brief e-mail with your cover letter and CV attached. Be sure to include complete and accurate contact information. If you have a personal connection (i.e. your mentor suggested you contact them, or your family is in the area) state it. Consider asking your mentors to reach out in tandem to their contacts at the same institution. The people receiving these e-mails are busy. Make it easy for them to read your information and respond to you.

5. **WAIT:** Positive responses of interest will be welcomed (of course) and negative responses (we don't have anything) are easy to interpret. The challenge is dealing with no response. This may be because they don't have anything to offer you, they didn't read your e-mail or read it and forgot to reply. If you didn't get a response and you are very interested, send a polite follow up e-mail and consider a phone call to reinforce your interest (again, attach your CV). Also consider asking your mentors to reach out to their contacts at the same institution.

AS YOU ASSEMBLE POSITIVE RESPONSES, KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND:

6. **BE PREPARED:** Before you correspond or visit a department learn as much as you can about their strengths and weaknesses through their website and your colleagues. People who have given thought to the potential position impress potential employers (see have a plan).

7. **HAVE A PLAN:** Help potential employers to see how you can help their organization in order to get and keep them interested. You need to balance 1. an idea of what you would like to do and how you would like to spend your time (see 'be introspective' above) with 2. a willingness to be flexible (e.g. coverage of resident clinic or VA if needed). This will make your story compelling and make you a desirable colleague.

8. **BE PROFESSIONAL:** For any positive (or non-negative responses) respond completely and in a timely manner. They may ask for more information, invite you for interviews etc. Follow their lead and discuss things with your mentors. Be courteous in your interactions with everyone including non-physician staff who coordinate your visits. Follow up with thank you notes and keep your potential employer updated as to where you are in your search process.

Soon you will be on your way to negotiating a position (covered in another fact sheet).

Good Luck!

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