

The Meaning Of Intent

Specific topics for this newsletter are not surfacing from candidates or sites. I'm hoping that means that this summer has been especially productive and that the challenges that frequently bob to the surface of our lives are fewer.

I believe, however, that it means we are all increasingly busy with the growing complexities of living in the 21st century. Change happens constantly – in ways we could barely have imagined ten years ago. Now that we have reached this level of technology does that mean things will level off? I don't think so. I think nano-seconds, formerly known as a 'jiffy', will keep speeding our lives into a more frenzied pace.

I saw a television program that was looking at 'life' trainers for our Hollywood stars; trainers who could coach the stars toward making the most of their time here on earth.

Those choosing to practice in rural Oregon are my personal Doc Hollywoods. As you and I begin looking toward the 2006 hiring season, I would like to provide a few suggestions to help in making sure that your start – either as a new practicing physician or as a practice hiring a new provider – is all that you would have hoped for.

To explain what I mean by intent, I would like to share this example. When an individual walks two miles with the intention of health-building physical exercise the result is different than if that same individual walks that same two miles just to get from Point A to Point B. The

physical body responds differently to the mind's intent.

With this in mind, I would like to suggest that the manner in which you go about your search does yield different results. Practices need to know the personal and professional characteristics of their ideal practitioner. They need to know the attributes that will fit into their practice and the skills that will meet their practice needs.

In order to know this, they will need to have a mutual and realistic understanding of the practice as it currently exists. When these understandings are written down they have much greater impact. All interested parties are able to see and support or suggest changes of the stated perspective. Once mutual support is obtained, you will know that you need, for instance, a forward thinking or a calm listener, who has perhaps, trauma skills or ortho interests. Everyone will understand that delays in documentation and billing affect the business of the practice. The practice expectations are clearly stated, as well as repercussions for lack of support of this process.

With this information, the appropriate candidate will be much more easily identified when they present themselves for consideration.

The candidate will need this same kind of self-assessment, with input and support from family members. Candidates need to have a clear

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Dear "Aunt Jo"

Your recruitment questions answered



Dear Aunt Jo:

I am a relatively new provider in my current location here in Oregon. I am not happy with the way things are going here and am looking at other

options that may provide more professional and personal satisfaction. I am also not happy about the prospect of asking my family to change location to accommodate my professional life. Can you shed any light on this discouraging dilemma?

Disappointed and Unhappy

Dear D&U:

I am sorry to hear of your disappointing circumstances. This should be of particular concern to your practice. Staff turnover affects a practice's reputation as well as revenue. Retention is essential to rural communities and I hope that taking the risk of talking with your administrator or supervising provider will change things for the better for you.

I would suggest you first outline the areas of disappointment in your current practice. Write them down so that you can make notes as you consider various perspectives. Develop a written communication to share with the party that hired you and ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns.

For instance, suppose your patient schedule is not allowing you time for thorough examinations. Be prepared to discuss your perception of why it may take you longer than another to see patients – they are more complex, you need more education time for certain patients, you need more time to develop a rapport with younger patients – this type of thing. Propose some ideas for possible solutions.

If the issue is that you don't feel you have any say in clinic operations, be prepared to discuss how it makes you feel to not be asked for input

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Roseburg's Physician Recruitment Committee

Recruitment in Douglas County has a radical look you may not recognize. The local medical community has formed a group to recruit providers year-round for all of the practices in the area.

The committee is chaired by Dr. Bob Dannenhoffer, Vice President, Clinical Effectiveness, Mercy Medical Center, and 2005 President of the Oregon Medical Association. The committee is comprised of between 8 and 20 health professionals, depending on how many people are involved in the hiring process. It includes all physician groups in the area and other senior medical staff from Mercy Medical Center.

Formed three years ago, the group recruits doctors based on a community-needs assessment survey conducted annually by Solucient, a research company for health care businesses based in Evanston, Ill. The company compares the area's population and age of residents with the number of doctors serving the area and determines where there are gaps in service.

"We went into this with the idea that if we don't work together, the whole community will suffer [from a lack of physicians]," said Dell Gray, Administrator and CEO of the Roseburg Clinic and a member of the committee. Using a set of guidelines agreed upon by the committee, physicians are recruited by the group for any practice in the area with an opening. The physician recruitment committee has brought a total of 30 new providers to the area.

The committee works to recruit physicians who will find a good fit in Douglas County. "It's difficult to get them here, and we want them to stay here," said Kathleen Nickel, Director of Communications, Mercy Medical Center. Many physicians come from urban areas and are trained in urban areas, making it difficult to recruit them to rural communities. Aware of this, the committee works on selling the quality of life in a rural community like Roseburg. Fewer traffic jams, prevalent outdoor recreation, local natural attractions and a good place to raise a family are offered as some of the benefits of living in a rural community. "It's important to have the new doctors stay in town because it gives Douglas County residents a chance to receive care locally," said Dr. Dannenhoffer.

There is also an important social component to the recruitment plan. "We are conscious of recruiting both the physician and their spouse. We don't interview a physician who won't bring their spouse to visit," said Gray. The importance of family and social acceptance in the Roseburg community is an important perspective of the committee.

The Roseburg Chamber of Commerce connects potential new physicians and their families with social, recreational and community clubs in the area. They also sponsor a Welcome Reception every year. "Because most of the physicians start in late summer after they've finished training," said Nickel, "the Chamber hosts a yearly Welcome Reception for all new doctors in

September." Physicians new to the area, along with their spouses, meet with their physician colleagues and other community members, making valuable personal and professional contacts.

The local paper, *The News-Review*, also gets involved in the process by doing feature articles on newly hired physicians. Real estate agents show the new physicians and their families what kind of housing is available in the community.

"When we talk about our community recruitment process outside of Douglas County, people are surprised to see how well it works, and how well we work together," says Nickel. Mercy Medical Center does not employ physicians, they work as independent contractors, but the organization is committed to ensuring areas residents are well served with access to health care.

Like most rural areas, Douglas County struggles to recruit enough physicians. The net number of doctors serving the area is little changed from three years ago due to retirements, deaths and relocations. "The market for physicians is a national market," said Gray. "Young physicians are savvy communicators, and savvy technology users. Something extra needs to be offered to bring them to Roseburg."

Gray's Roseburg Clinic offers that something extra. "We have an income guarantee for physicians, and they share in any profits that are in excess of the floor of their income." This certainly helps with retention, even with J-1 visa physicians.

In fact, Gray has been very successful at recruiting J-1 visa physicians. Successes include three general internists and four internal medicine sub specialists. Four have been at the clinic for two years and all of them are making plans to stay. How does Gray integrate the new physicians into a rural practice and a rural community? "One key to success is the high quality of the physicians hired. The quality of the physicians must be extraordinary and this is key to being accepted by the medical community and by patients. The candidate's residency and fellowship training must be from a first tier organization," said Gray.

Being accepted by patients and by the local medical community is essential to retaining physicians the committee works so hard to recruit. Douglas County has a growing senior population who doesn't want to travel for primary or specialty care. When necessary services can be offered locally, patient satisfaction improves and physician retention is aided by the building of a strong and stable business.

The physician recruitment committee works to recruit and retain physicians for all medical practices in the area because it is a benefit to the community as a whole. Using this process of recruiting by committee, recruitment and retention are blended

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together seamlessly, and the community is composed of physicians who are eager to call Douglas County home.

For more information on the Roseburg physician recruitment committee, please contact Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator, Office of Rural Health, 1-866-674-4376, or johnsjo@ohsu.edu.

AAFP Annual Conference

In July, Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator for the Office of Rural Health's HERO program, had an opportunity to exhibit at the American Academy of Family Physicians' National Conference of Family Medicine Residents & Medical Students. The four-day conference is a gathering of residents and medical students interested in pursuing careers in Family Medicine. Recruitment programs from around the country participate in the conference as exhibitors, marketing their state's hospitals and clinics to the conference's 1600 participants.

"I found exhibiting at this conference to be hugely beneficial," said Johnson. "I was able to meet some of the candidates I'm currently working with and connect with those seeking employment in rural practices in the coming years."

It became obvious over the course of the conference that the conference attendees tended to naturally navigate toward the technology displays. As a result, "I will be putting together an electronic presentation that depicts various clinics to share specifically with other Northwest recruitment programs," said Johnson. "This presentation will help attract that initial attention one needs to have to develop a relationship. Once the connection is made, then it's up to the individual parties to maintain, but I see this as an aide to the initial contact effort."

"Electronic presentations reflect information relevant to the current age," says Johnson, and will be used for recruitment at future conferences. Practices are encouraged to participate in this project by sending in photos and information in electronic format about their opportunities to the Office of Rural Health.

Johnson had the opportunity to make face-to-face contact with several Northwest residency programs and is planning over the next year to spend some time visiting and sharing information about rural Oregon practices with these programs. These contacts will help the HERO program access students and residents from around the region that are interested in practicing in rural Oregon.

If you would like to be represented in this effort, please contact Jo Johnson at the Office of Rural Health either by e-mail, johnsjo@ohsu.edu, or toll-free at 866-674-4376.

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before decisions are made. Again, have some suggestions for resolving this situation. For example, suggest meetings that allow for a more democratic process. Emphasize the value of soliciting input from others and the mutual respect that effort demonstrates. Remind the person you're meeting with that the success of the practice is related to the level of collaboration and investment of all staff members.

There is an empirically confirmed premise that the manner by which all employees relate to and care about each other directly impacts the quality of patient care. By taking a proactive role in communicating with your practice leaders about your dissatisfaction, changes can be made to foster staff investment and satisfaction, resulting in improved patient care and practice success. Hopefully, you will also find renewed professional gratification in your choice of practices and your family can stay 'rooted' in the community.

Kind regards, Aunt Jo

For recruitment and retention assistance, contact Jo Johnson, Recruitment Services Coordinator, toll-free 866-674-4376.

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understanding – again written down – of what their professional and personal needs are. If you don't formulated specifics you will have a difficult time identifying the practice and community best suited to your professional and personal needs. What kind of practice are you seeking? What to you desire in terms of philosophy of practice, personnel and financial policies? How much to you wish to participate in the management process? What specialty or hospital support is are you most comfortable with? What referral systems are available in the community? Does the required call coverage provide the leisure time you desire?

On a personal level - What type of recreational activities are you seeking? Is there a religious denomination that you require? What are the requirements for your children: schools, sports, or special needs? Are there peer groups available for all family members? Are there employment opportunities for family members? What neighborhood 'feel' are you seeking?

These are the types of questions that will help identify your INTENT - the intent to hire someone to 'fit' your needs and the intent to practice in a professionally rewarding location and live in a comfortable environment. With conscious and deliberate thought to identify and focus expectations, realization of the expectations is much more easily attainable. The up-front time spent establishing Intent will maximize the time and energy spent on the effort and will result in greater success for the candidate and the recruiting practice.

**The HERO Program at the
Oregon Office of Rural Health
would like to hear from you!**

Call us at:
503-494-4450 or
toll free, 866-ORH-HERO

Our full mailing address is:
OHSU
Office of Rural Health/L593
3181 SW Sam Jackson Pk Rd
Portland OR 97239-3011

Web site:
www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth