

Ask the experts

Overlooked interview questions

Editor's note: PCR asked our experts to share often-overlooked questions that should be asked of physician candidates. Send your questions for our experts to roxanna@healthleadersmedia.com.

Jim Stone, managing partner and cofounder, Medicus Partners

Generally, many groups and hospitals fall into the trap of thinking that a doctor is a doctor and not digging in to find out more about the candidate, his or her skills, preferences, personality, etc. Interviewers spend more time selling candidates on coming to their town than they do ensuring a match between what the candidate is seeking and what the practice or system needs. An example of some questions that might be overlooked include:

- » What types of procedures/cases/patients do you prefer to see? Which do you struggle with?
- » What is your philosophy in handling difficult patients?
- » What is most important to you as you consider a new practice?

David Shaw, COO and principal, The Coker Group

When interviewing a physician, the recruiting entity should be cognizant of two important components: acquiring and retaining the physician. On the acquiring side, when a physician is weighing a job opportunity, the four top areas of consideration are geographic location, financial package, call coverage arrangement, and loan forgiveness.

The smart interviewer will help the physician determine, with questioning and interaction, the rank or hierarchy of

these four areas. You might simply ask the candidate to rank the four areas in order of importance. This approach will often provide greater clarity for the candidate so that he or she will make the right choice based on satisfying the most critical areas of importance.

The retention side of the equation is one that often goes untouched in the recruitment process. This area is especially important when the recruited doctor will be joining an existing practice. Once these relationships turn sour, it is usually not for reasons of clinical differences.

And although there is not one question that the interviewer can ask to determine this, there are excellent assessment tools available to aid in the process. To recruit a physician to join a practice and have the situation not work because the doctors couldn't get along is often worse than never having brought the new recruit to town.

James W. Lord, principal, ECG Management Consultants

I think the most important, but often overlooked, issue when recruiting is fit. All too often, organizations get enamored with specialties and begin to think of coverage more than the fit with the community and the organization. Typically, this leads to a rather quick and painful realization that the recruit is not a match.

In our experience, physicians tend to live where they trained or where they are from. When they are outside of this norm, additional care should be taken to understand the driver. It could simply be the desire to live on the coast, but could also be an indicator of past issues. ■

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