

WDS CAREER CORNER: THINGS I WISH I HAD KNOWN

Pitfalls in the First Year of Work and How to Avoid Them

We asked members of the WDS Young Physicians Committee to share their insight and experiences from their first year on the job, and here's what they said. Special thanks to **Deanne Mraz Robinson, MD, FAAD**, Assistant Clinical Professor of Dermatology at Yale New Haven Hospital, who also graciously provided input and content for this article.

What pitfalls did you encounter in the first year that you wish you would have known about?

“Attend lectures on billing/coding during the annual AAD meeting or utilize some of the resources on the AAD website and familiarize yourself prior to starting.”

“Establish your niche as soon as possible in academia. It sets you apart from others, helps define your contribution to the department, and opens up opportunities that come with being an expert in something.”

“The business of medicine is a steep learning curve. Prepare as much as possible by working and/or talking with other people on best practices.”

“The steep learning curve of a new EMR can be offset by attending a training session prior to starting instead of incorporating these tools during clinic.”

What did you do to prepare for the transition for your first job?

“Make friends with people who have recently made a similar transition. Be candid and compare notes on salary, staff support, research support, and admin support.”

“Develop a thorough business plan/model. Meet with numerous advisors and consultants. Meet with people locally and nationally. Get advice from mentors.”

“As a current surgical fellow, I am taking the second half of my fellowship year to imagine myself as an autonomous provider as much as possible. By putting myself in this role I am able to identify areas of weakness or potential difficulty as I start out.”

**What would you say is most important to focus on or do within the first month of the job?
Within the first 6 months?**

“Meet as many people as possible and hit the ground running.”

“Observe and learn the system. Learn the hierarchy. **Find your common goals.**”

“**Be ready to work hard and get involved**, but don’t overextend yourself.”

“Learn everyone's names, including front desk staff, admin, etc.”

“Focus on getting very efficient with your documentation.”

“Establish your niche.”

“Establishing a routine not only for getting out of the house, especially if children are involved, but also routines for starting the day (checking results, communications, etc.), coordinating care with MAs and phone nurses, performing procedures, and counseling ‘scripts’ for common patient complaints.”

**What advice do you have for young physicians who are preparing to start a job in
academics/private practice/start their own practice?**

“Have mentors both within and outside the organization”

“Speak to a lot of colleagues, get advice from people who have done it before. **Visit lots of practices. Look at how they run their office, look at EMRs.**”

“Write down your dream job and the career you hope to establish. Apply this framework to both a private and academic setting in order to imagine the pros and cons you might encounter, so as to better identify where you feel you are best able to practice Dermatology in a way that is fulfilling.”

“Have a good list of questions to ask practice managers and speak to as many people in a given setting as possible- physicians, MAs, other staff.”

What advice do you have for young physicians moving to a new city?

“**Consider the neighborhood and how your work-life balance would be.** What is the quality of schools in the area? How long is your commute? Ask colleagues with similar life situations.”

“Have an open mind. To be professionally happy, you have to be personally happy as well. Have a support network and people you can rely on. Consider the location of your home relative to these people, work, and child care.”

“If there is time, **allow yourself a few weeks to settle into a new home and city** before starting work to establish favorite grocery stores, weekend activities, and restaurants.”

What advice do you have on contract negotiations?

“Make a wish list, determine what you are willing to compromise on, what you’re not willing to compromise on, and negotiate your contract based on that list.”

“**Remember to negotiate for what is important to you and think outside of the box** - whether it is more vacation days, CME time/funds, more scribe/MA support, salary, starting bonus, etc. A lot of people just take what they get. Go through with a fine-tooth comb. Hire a great attorney to look over the contract. There tends to be less room for negotiation in academics compared to private practice.”

How did you prepare for managing staff? What tips do you have for running a team?

“I would recommend **leadership training**, specifically how to manage a team. I initially made the mistake of ‘being their friend’ but then found that it made it difficult to give them honest feedback after they made a mistake. Schedule regular sessions with staff to make sure you are constantly improving the flow of the clinic.

“**Engage in personal and professional development activities at AAD.** Be involved. Be open to suggestions and communications. There’s always someone else who has gone through it.”

“Know when to ask for the help of a practice manager and step away from a situation.”

**What financial decision did you make your first year of practice?
(Retirement accounts, financial advisor, investments, how to handle loans)**

“I found a financial advisor to be very helpful. I think **it’s never too early to start thinking about retirement and start making small investments while paying down your loans**. In most cases, loan consolidation will help save you money.”

“Before making a big purchase (car, home), consider how much your monthly obligations will be with student loans, mortgages, lease, etc. **Consult with a financial advisor** before you graduate to help you sort through how to pay down your loans while still starting to save for your first home and retirement. Make sure you have a really sound disability plan.”

What tips do you have for efficiency and success during the first year?

“Take the time to learn the EMR well.”

“**Don’t overcommit yourself too early on. Determine what your priorities are, and don’t feel obligated to say “yes” to every opportunity that comes along your way.** If the opportunity doesn’t fit the “big picture” of your goals, then it’s beneficial to say “no”.”

“Maximize efficiency by delegating, pre-screening patients, and putting patients into appropriate time slots. A great EMR can help (if integrated into the billing). Utilize technology to its maximum instead of allowing it to become a hindrance.”

“I would request extra urgent return visit spots early on - when you are starting out it is nice to have patients that you are worried about follow up closely without having to double book them in your schedule.”

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Watch the WDS Webinar Series featuring advice and information from expert physicians in the field of dermatology brought to you by the WDS Young Physicians Committee and Galderma.

- **Part 1: Negotiating a Contract**
- **Part 2: Building a Brand**
- **Part 3: How To Choose Your Path**
- **Part 3.1: How To Choose Your Path**



Part 1: Negotiating a Contract

Advice on navigating the job search process, as well as negotiating contracts



Part 2: Building a Brand

Advice on how to start building a brand and reputation



Part 3: How To Choose Your Path

First installment of a two part series on how to choose one's path in dermatology



Part 3.1: How To Choose Your Path

Second installment of a two part series on how to choose one's path in dermatology