

## **Additional or Alternate Career Paths for Physicians** **by: Celeste Hollands, MD, FACS, FAAP**

Twenty years ago as I started medical school I focused on graduating and matching into a residency. The biggest decision was which residency was right for me. As I progressed through my residency, I addressed the question of general surgery or sub-specialty and then private practice or academics. That was it. There always seemed to be two forks in the road.

I am not sure if it is because I am older and wiser or because times have changed but the career choices now seem to be organized more into a flow chart than two forks in the road. There are so many more choices and so many more options for additional training and these choices and options are available at many career levels. The information age has put all of this information at our fingertips much earlier in our career and we can plan for it instead of stumble into or settle for it when we need a change.

The ability to have a blended career consisting of clinical and non-clinical responsibilities is one option. Another is a non-clinical or alternate career path where you likely will not engage in traditional clinical practice. Considering these options early and planning for the advanced degrees and additional training they may require is important. It is also equally important to talk to someone currently working in your area of interest and to seek out mentors in these areas.

This article is intended to introduce these paths to you and provide resources for you to begin to consider these options. It is by no means an all-inclusive piece on alternate career paths for physicians.

### **Physician Executive Path**

Interest in physician leaders continues to increase. If you are interested in joining the C-suite (Chief Medical Officer, Chief Operating Officer, etc. - the highest level healthcare executives with titles often starting with "Chief") you will likely need some training in business. This training can be on the job training as you rise within your organization or you may choose to seek more formal training that will give you that business credibility you will need to be successful.

Three advanced degrees to consider are MBA (Masters in Business Administration), MPH ([Masters in Public Health](#)), and MMM ([Masters in Medical Management](#)). These are the most popular degrees for this path but not the only ones. The resources listed at the end of this article discuss additional options or link to them.

The [American Association of Physician Leaders](#) (formerly known as ACPE, American College of Physician Executives) is an important organization for physician executives and offers a number of educational programs.

Additional certification as a [Certified Physician Executive](#) (CPE) is also available through the Certifying Commission in Medical Management (CCMM).

## Other “Non-Clinical” or Alternative Career Paths

There are a host of other non-clinical or alternative career paths to consider. When searching for information on this topic the term non-clinical is used though any of these paths could be combined with clinical practice to form a blended career path.

In general non-clinical jobs can be grouped into: Medical communications/writing/education; Consulting; Health Information Technology (Health IT); Pharma/Biotech; and Medical Law. The specific jobs for medical communications/writing/education can include: medical marketing, medical recruiting, certified medical education, medical publications, and medical blogging. Consulting jobs are generally for clinical cases or business challenges, medical start-up companies, medical device companies, and medical chart reviews. Health IT jobs may include electronic health records and medical informatics. Pharma and Biotech jobs exist in medical research (performing the research or a regulatory position), medical science liaison, medical sales, and medical entrepreneurship. Finally, medical law is another non-clinical area to consider.

SEAK, Inc. is an ACCME accredited continuing education & publishing firm that hosts an annual conference entitled: [SEAK's Non-Clinical Careers Conference](#) that may be of interest for those seriously considering these career paths.

Blended, alternative or non-clinical career paths are certainly not for everyone. However, being informed about them and exploring them may just help you organize your best career path no matter what your current career level.

### **Resources:**

#### General

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/827680>

[http://www.the-rheumatologist.org/details/article/1458007/Challenges\\_and\\_Rewards\\_of\\_a\\_Physician\\_Executive\\_Career.html](http://www.the-rheumatologist.org/details/article/1458007/Challenges_and_Rewards_of_a_Physician_Executive_Career.html)

<http://www.cejkaexecutivesearch.com/leadership-insights/executive-recruitment-library/inside-the-executive-office-physician-leaders-share-experiences-advice/>

<http://creativeleadersforum.com/2013/02/09/do-physician-executives-need-advanced-degrees-barbara-letourneau-md-mba/>

<http://www.nonclinicaljobs.com/2010/04/popular-alternative-medical-careers-for.html>

<http://www.nonclinicaljobs.com/p/career-coaching-for-physicians.html>

## Degrees

<http://business.louisville.edu/wpprod/images/Ranked20.pdf>

[http://www.physicianleadership.com/articles/physician\\_MBA.htm](http://www.physicianleadership.com/articles/physician_MBA.htm)

<http://profitable-practice.softwareadvice.com/should-you-get-a-healthcare-mba-0114/>

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/medical-school-admissions-doctor/2013/09/17/consider-a-master-of-public-health-in-addition-to-an-md>

<http://www.healthcare-administration-degree.net/the-mba-for-physicians-master-of-medical-management-mmm/>

<http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/law-admissions-lowdown/2013/02/25/consider-career-goals-before-getting-a-joint-degree>

<http://www.premedhq.com/2013/01/list-of-mdjd-programs.html>

## Organizations, Conferences and Certifications

<http://www.physicianleaders.org>

<http://ccmm.org>

<http://www.nonclinicalcareers.com/conference/>