

Frequently Asked Questions About Family Medicine: 2016 Edition

VINCE WINKLERPRINS, MD, and JAY SIWEK, MD
*Georgetown University Medical Center, Washington,
District of Columbia*

► See related article at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2016/0201/oa1.html>.

Although *American Family Physician* primarily publishes clinical information to help readers in the care of their patients, we occasionally publish articles related to the specialty of family medicine. In this vein, we are happy to announce the publication of the latest edition of an article on questions frequently asked by medical students about family medicine.¹ First published more than 30 years ago, this reference article has been updated several times, some with accompanying editorials.²⁻⁸ Many of the original questions remain, although in some cases the answers have evolved with the practice of family medicine.

The article is directed at medical students, but provides important information for more than 100,000 family physician readers. Practicing family physicians are role models for medical students and strongly influence career decisions about family medicine. Hundreds of medical students have told us that an office rotation with a family physician is what inspired them to choose family medicine as a career. What students see in practice is an important influence, but so is what they hear. Unfortunately, students are sometimes dissuaded from family medicine when rotating with other specialists. It is important that family physicians are armed with the latest information about our specialty to counsel students who may be interested. This article provides that guidance.

At Georgetown University Medical Center, we have a required four-week family medicine clerkship for all third-year medical students. With each new crop of students, we spend time discussing what family medicine is, what family physicians do, how we think and work, and what we feel passionate about. However, the true meaning of family medicine cannot be conveyed in a classroom talk. That is where you come in, and that is where the updated article about family medicine comes in.

Our students need stories, mentors, and information in their hunt for the right career. The stories are everywhere: you have them, our patients have them, and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) has provided many more with the In Their Own Words series.⁹ We need you to be a mentor. Every family physician

who works with students is a mentor. We appeal to each of you to embrace and own this role and to seek out students or residents with whom you can work and talk about your own career and the career path before them. Not connected to students or residents? Call a local medical school department of family medicine or a local residency. This article will help you find each other, because every curious medical student will inevitably search for information about family medicine. We hope they will come across this article, as well as other information about family medicine for medical students and residents, including that provided by the AAFP (<http://www.aafp.org/medical-school-residency.html>).

We believe it is essential to give students a good sense of what their lives could be like and what the possibilities are for 21st-century family physicians. Share and disseminate this article widely, save the talking points for times when you have a curious student, embrace your roles as mentors, and keep the stories coming.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Siwek is editor of *American Family Physician*.

Address correspondence to Vince WinklerPrins, MD, at vince.winklerprins@georgetown.edu. Reprints are not available from the authors.

Author disclosure: No relevant financial affiliations.

REFERENCES

1. Kozakowski SM, Becher K, Hinkle T, et al. Responses to medical students' frequently asked questions about family medicine. <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2016/0201/oa1.html>. Accessed January 8, 2016.
2. Scherger JE, Beasley JW, Brunton SA, et al. Responses to questions frequently asked by medical students about family practice. *J Fam Pract*. 1983;17(6):1047-1052.
3. Scherger JE, Beasley JW, Gaebe GI, Swee DE, Kahn NB, Rodney WM. Responses to questions about family practice as a career. *Am Fam Physician*. 1992;46(1):115-125.
4. Siwek J, Rivo M. Questions about family practice. *Am Fam Physician*. 1992;46(1):57.
5. Garner JG, Scherger JE, Beasley JW, et al. Responses to questions about the specialty of family practice as a career. *Am Fam Physician*. 1999;60(1):167-174.
6. Siwek J. Family practice as a career choice. *Am Fam Physician*. 1999;60(1):38.
7. McGaha AL, Garrett E, Jobe AC, et al. Responses to medical students' frequently asked questions about family medicine. *Am Fam Physician*. 2007;76(1):99-106.
8. Duane M, Stone L, Sisson R. Inspiring future family physicians: the challenge is ours. *Am Fam Physician*. 2007;76(1):36.
9. American Academy of Family Physicians. Career Q&A with family physicians: life and work in family medicine. <http://www.aafp.org/medical-school-residency/choosing-fm/physician-qas.html>. Accessed November 10, 2015. ■