

# What Makes a Good CV?

Tanja Getter

**Whether for your first job after residency or a career change, here are some keys to getting your curriculum vitae noticed by employers.**

**C**hief executive officers, medical directors, and physician recruiters have specific needs when looking to fill a position. My experience working with hospitals and health systems has helped me understand what they are looking for and the best ways a physician can use his or her curriculum vitae (CV) to make a favorable impression. The tips below and the sample CV (see page 8) will help you put your best foot forward.

**Name and contact information.** Getting this part of the CV right is not as simple as it seems. First, don't get too fancy with formatting. As with all of the sections of your CV, if you keep it clean, simple, and easy to read, recruiters and hiring physicians will thank you.

Be sure to list your specialty just under your name so that it is easily visible. A surprising number of physicians omit this detail and leave it to the reader to deduce from their education details. Make it easy for the reader.

Include a phone number at which you are easily reached, most likely your cell phone.

Email addresses can be a source of problems. Avoid using an email address tied to your current setting, such as a residency address, if there's a chance it will be disabled during your job search. Also, make sure your personal email address isn't too personal; reserve your "hotdoctor" email addresses for friends and family, not potential employers.

**Education.** List your education in reverse chronological order, starting with your residency or your fellowship. Formatting and spacing can make a big difference in how your CV flows and how easy it is to read. On the left side of the page include institutions, degrees, and locations. On the right side, list the dates. It is important to include the start and end dates using months and years. Whether you are

coming straight out of residency or looking for a change many years into your career, potential employers are looking for gaps in your timeline. For instance, they are looking to see if you went straight into medical school after college and if you began practicing immediately after residency. If you are later in your career, they want to see if there have been interruptions in your employment. Gaps should be explained in your cover letter, which we will discuss later.

**Licensure and certifications.** State medical licenses and board certifications should be listed following your education. These qualifications are always at the top of a recruiter or hiring physician's list of questions.

**Experience.** Format this section the same way you formatted the section on education. It is not necessary to write long descriptions of your duties and responsibilities. You really only need the name of the employer, your title or position, the location, and the dates. If you had a career before medicine, list your previous employment under a separate heading. Your timeline should not extend beyond the first page, as it and the sections that precede it are the most important parts of your CV.

**Other sections.** You want to keep your CV as short as possible and generally no more than two pages long. Space permitting, other sections to consider adding include Leadership, Awards, Professional Affiliations/Memberships, Community Service, and Additional Skills, which would capture procedural skills, electronic health record proficiency, or languages spoken. Include only information relevant to your desired position. For example, if you have no interest in doing obstetrics, then you do not need to include every obstetrics conference or rotation you completed in medical school.

**Academic positions.** If you are pursuing an opportunity in an academic setting, it is crucial to add a section listing research, publications, presentations, poster projects, abstracts, grants, and scholarships. This type of CV will follow a different order. See the Association of American Medical Colleges (<https://www.aamc.org/>) resources for more information. ►

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### About the Author

Tanja Getter is lead director for the residency education program for Community Health Systems in Franklin, Tenn. Author disclosure: no relevant financial affiliations disclosed.

**Sally Smith, MD****Family Medicine**

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**Education and Medical Training**

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Family Medicine Residency</b>         | 07/2014 – 06/2017 |
| Bayfront Health – St. Petersburg, FL     |                   |
| • Chief Resident                         |                   |
| <b>Medical Degree</b>                    | 08/2010 – 05/2014 |
| Baylor College of Medicine – Houston, TX |                   |
| <b>Bachelor's Degree in Science</b>      | 08/2006 – 05/2010 |
| University of Tennessee – Knoxville, TN  |                   |
| • Summa cum laude                        |                   |

**Licensure and Certifications**

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| TN State Medical License                           | Pending       |
| American Board of Family Medicine – Board Eligible | As of 04/2017 |
| BLS/ACLS, PALS, etc.                               | Expires 2019  |

**Experience**

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Urgent Care Physician</b>                           | 12/2015 – present |
| The Urgent Care Clinic – St. Petersburg, FL            |                   |
| <b>Volunteer Physician</b> conducting Sports Physicals | 09/2015 – present |
| Local High Schools – St. Petersburg, FL                |                   |

**Leadership/Committees**

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Member</b> of Quality Care Committee            | 2015 – 2016 |
| Bayfront Health – St. Petersburg, FL               |             |
| <b>Secretary</b> of AMA Texas Chapter              | 2013 – 2014 |
| American Medical Student Association – Houston, TX |             |

**Professional Affiliations/Memberships**

|                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| American Academy of Family Physicians | As of 2014 |
| Florida Academy of Family Physicians  | As of 2014 |

**Community Service**

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Habitat for Humanity – St. Petersburg, FL | 2014 – present |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters – Knoxville, TN  | 2008 – 2010    |

**Additional Skills**

Fluent in German and conversational in Spanish; EHR proficient in Epic, Cerner, and Athena.

**Personal Information**

I enjoy outdoor activities such as running and biking. I also enjoy spending time with my husband and traveling abroad.

**Personal information.** The last section should describe your personal interests and hobbies. These details are important to include. Potential employers want to know what you (and your family, if applicable) are interested in because they want to assess what your ties to the community may be. If the community is a good fit for you and your family, you are more likely to stay for longer than just a single contract term. By including this personal information, you have already started the conversation and helped give employers an idea of what you are looking for.

**Cover letter.** Your cover letter – in today’s age, likely an email – is just as important as your CV because it serves as your introduction and your “elevator speech.” Quickly tell employers who you are, what you want to do for them, and why you are interested in their opportunity. Like your CV, your cover letter should be short and easy to read.

The paragraph after your initial introduction is the best place to address any gaps or inconsistencies in your timeline. If you don’t address them, expect employers to have questions: Why is there a time gap? Where were you and what were you doing during that time? Why did you switch residency programs? Not explaining gaps only raises red flags for many employers. Some gaps are easier

to explain than others. You may have taken time off to raise your children, been on medical leave, cared for a sick grandparent, etc. You may want to address these in your cover letter by stating something along these lines, “As you can see on my enclosed CV, I took some time off during medical school to raise my children, who are now of school age.” Understandably, there may be past situations that you cannot easily explain, but be honest and briefly mention them in your cover letter. You can go into further detail during a face-to-face interview if necessary.

If you tried a different career path before going into medicine, it would not hurt to also briefly explain in the cover letter why you changed careers.

Although this work may seem intimidating and overwhelming at first, keep in mind that you already have the information necessary and just need to put it together in one place. Once you have done so, you’ll be on your way to creating a good CV. **FPM**

Send comments to [fpmedit@aafp.org](mailto:fpmedit@aafp.org), or add your comments to the article at <http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2016/1100/p7.html>.



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Registration and Housing opens in November.*

