

## What it's like in internal medicine: Shadowing Dr. Hingle

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As a medical student, do you ever wonder what it's like to specialize in preventive medicine? Meet Susan Thompson Hingle, MD, an internist and a featured physician in the *AMA Wire*® “Shadow Me” Specialty Series, which offers advice directly from physicians about life in their specialties. Check out her insights to help determine whether a career in internal medicine might be a good fit for you.

**“Shadowing” Dr. Hingle** (@SusanHingle)

**Specialty:** Internal medicine.

**Practice setting:** Group.

**Employment type:** Academic.

**Years in practice:** 20.

**A typical day in my practice:** There is no such thing as a typical day for me, which is exactly how I like it. I have a mix of outpatient clinic, teaching, mentoring, advising, and administrative work. Each day is different and exciting. I regularly get to interact with patients, medical students, residents and colleagues.

**The most challenging and rewarding aspects of internal medicine:** Internal medicine patients tend to be older and sicker, with multiple medical problems and often significant social and psychologic challenges as well. However, internists—me included—enjoy the complexity this provides. It is so rewarding to work through not only the acute issue at hand, but how that interdigitates with their chronic issues and how to best provide patient centered care.

I have had many of my patients in my practice for 15–20 years, so I get to form such long-lasting, meaningful relationships with them. I truly get to know my patients as people, and I am forever grateful for that.

**Three adjectives to describe the typical internist:** Inquisitive, problem-solvers, patient-centered.

**How my lifestyle matches, or differs from, what I had envisioned:** I grew up with my dad—an ob-gyn—and my mom, a nurse, as my role models. I had a good idea of what I was getting into. I believe the integration of our personal and professional goals and lives is always a challenge, not only for those in the medical profession but for all human beings. I feel that as long as you are reflective and honest about what is working and what isn't working, and are willing to make changes, that finding fulfillment in both your professional and your personal life is possible.

**Skills every physician in training should have for internal medicine but won't be tested for on the board exam:** Outstanding listening skills as well as empathetic, compassionate communication & interpersonal skills. Additionally, the ability to see the big picture amongst all of the details and never lose sight of the patient as a person.

**One question physicians in training should ask themselves before pursuing internal medicine:** Do I love problem solving in a patient-centered way for people with multiple medical problems?

**Books every medical student interested in internal medicine should be reading:** I love books so much that answering a question like this is very challenging. But here are some:

| *The City of Joy*, by Dominique LaPierre.

| *On Being a Doctor* (multiple volumes), by Michael LaCombe, MD, and Christine Laine, MD, MPH.

| *Being Mortal*, by Atul Gawande, MD, MPH.

| *Bedside: The Art of Medicine*, by Michael LaCombe, MD.

| *Why we revolt: A patient revolution for careful and kind care*, by Dr. Victor Montori.

| *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot.

**Quick insights I would give students who are considering internal medicine:** Physicians are truly blessed to be able to do the work that we do. It is all about the people. It is a true gift to be able to form meaningful relationships with people and to help them when they are in need.

## More about your specialty options

| Read more profiles in *AMA Wire's* "Shadow Me" Specialty Series to learn additional insights from physicians in such specialties as infectious disease medicine, adolescent medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, radiology and orthopedic surgery, among others.

| Check out more information from the AMA on choosing a medical specialty.

| Be sure to avoid these five common mistakes students make when choosing a specialty.