

## Choosing a physician specialty

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One of the most important decisions you will make during medical school is which physician specialty to pursue. Many factors go into this decision, including your personal history, your clinical interests, your experience during rotations, the duration of the training involved, and financial and lifestyle considerations.

Some medical students know which specialty they will choose before medical school, while others decide after completing a rotation they feel passionate about. Still others change their minds several times before finding the right fit. There is no fixed answer about when to choose a specialty.

FREIDA™, the AMA Residency & Fellowship Database™, has data on more than 12,000 graduate medical education programs. Follow these steps for using FREIDA alongside time-tested practical steps during your clerkship years to choose a specialty and prepare for the transition to residency.

Consider these four questions to help you get started in choosing a physician specialty.

## Narrowing your options

One early decision to make when deciding on a specialty is the choice between surgical and nonsurgical specialties. You can narrow your other options further once you have made this distinction.

Actual clinical rotation experience is crucial in providing an opportunity to see firsthand what day-to-day life is like in that specialty. Remember to keep an open mind and be objective during this process and examine all aspects before reaching a final decision.

FREIDA's Specialty Guide presents a clear, approachable overview of specialties and subspecialties and can assist you in choosing a career path. It's designed to simplify medical students' specialty selection process, highlight major specialties, detail training information, graduates' career plans and provide access to related association information.

Learn about the top 10 specialties with the most medical residency positions.

## Leveraging data

FREIDA's specialty program data can show the competitiveness of admissions to various residencies. Its insights can also help guide your studies. Find out how studying the data can be a practical way to pick a physician specialty.

Make sure to research every specialty that is of interest to you. And besides scrutinizing prospective specialties through FREIDA, take time to:

- Review facts and figures related to work-life balance, such as salary and vacation days.
- Contact physicians in specialties of interest and ask to shadow them.
- Look to the AMA's "Shadow Me" Specialty Series to understand how various specialists spend their days and handle the most challenging aspects of patient care.

## Ask the experts

Along with consulting the physician mentors you know personally, watch this AMA video series, which features doctors offering their insights on:

- The best part of your specialty.
- Ugly truths about your specialty.
- The culture of your specialty.
- Work-life balance in your specialty.
- Choosing your specialty.

Learn why you shouldn't let physician specialty stereotypes block the path that fits you.