

# Choosing a Career in Family Medicine



## What Every Medical Student Should Know

### You Should Know:

- **There is a vital need for family physicians**
- **Patients appreciate that family physicians can care for over 90% of their medical problems**
- **Family physicians are crucial to the U.S. healthcare system**
- **Practicing family medicine is an enjoyable, rewarding career**
- **Family medicine offers excellent income potential**
- **Family physicians deal with the greatest variety of patient problems**
- **Family physicians can tailor their practice to their interests, such as women's health, geriatrics, adolescents, or sports medicine**
- **The University of Florida has excellent residency programs in family medicine**

### **There is a vital need for family physicians.**

In the 1980s, several national studies predicted a severe shortage of primary care physicians over the next 10-20 years. From the 1970s through the mid-1990s, there was a significant expansion in the number of family medicine residencies in the U.S. to address the shortage of family physicians. Today there continues to be a strong demand for more family physicians.

### **Family physicians are crucial to the U.S. healthcare system.**

Family medicine's motto is to treat commonly seen health problems in an uncommonly outstanding fashion.

Research has shown that about 25 disorders account for over 50% of all patient complaints and 50 diagnoses account for over 90% of the family physicians' visits.

The family physician is trained and capable of caring for about 80-90% of all patient complaints. Family physicians focus on the common diseases seen in outpatient and inpatient settings and learn when to call on other specialists for help.

With over 70,000 practicing physicians and more than 320 residency programs, family medicine is an essential part of the U.S. healthcare system. As both the general population and the elderly population grow, the demand for health services will increase tremendously. The population of the U.S. is expected to rise by 30 million over the next 10 years, and family physicians will be in more demand than ever to manage this increasing caseload. Family physicians are experts at managing chronic disease, an ever increasing need among our aging population.

In order to provide personalized care for someone who has multiple disorders, family physicians offer treatment of the entire patient by one physician. When rotating through the different clerkships, you might hear a sub-specialist faculty or resident comment that no one can manage a specific disease better than a sub-specialist. But, what you might not hear is that highly trained, non-primary care specialists prefer to care only for problems in their area specialization: their expertise is better used when reserved for consultation on specific complex disorders. These limited specialists are very appreciative that family physicians take care of many commonly seen medical problems and refer to them only more complex cases.

## Practicing Family Medicine is an Enjoyable, Rewarding Career

Even in our era of increasing specialization, family medicine remains a vibrant specialty. Surveys of physicians report that while many are complaining about the paperwork, high uninsured rate, increasing malpractice premiums, and payment problems involved in practicing 21<sup>st</sup> century medicine, family physicians are among the happiest of all physicians.

Douglas LaBier, an organizational psychologist, offered the following insight about career satisfaction. "Professional happiness is constructed around three intertwined needs: to exercise creativity, to have relationships that offer mutual support and reciprocity, and to be free to pursue something that fulfills and reinforces a sense

of purpose and interconnection with others and life in general." Family medicine offers each of these elements. A family physician, faced with patients presenting with a wide variety of health concerns, uses a high level of creativity to manage, sort out, and solve medical problems using psychological, medical and integrative approaches.



Marvin Dewar, M.D., J.D.  
Associate Professor  
Affiliation and Provider Relations  
Community Health and Family Medicine

*"Family medicine provides the greatest number of career options of any specialty. You can work in the hospital or out of the hospital, in emergency rooms and urgent care centers, see patients of all ages and do a variety of different procedures if you so desire. For the medical student who 'likes everything' this is an ideal career choice!"*

-Marvin Dewar, M.D., J.D.



Siegfried Schmidt, M.D.  
Associate Professor, UF CHFM  
Family Medicine at Hampton Oaks

*"Contrary to general belief, we are the backbone of medicine and can impact our patients more than any other specialty. Your patients will seek your opinion in almost every aspect of their lives. It is an awesome responsibility, but also very satisfying."*

-Siegfried Schmidt, M.D.

## Choose Your Community Setting

Family physicians enjoy the richly rewarding experience of developing close relationships with their patients over years and even decades.

Most importantly, the family physician enjoys being there for patients and their families during times of crisis as well as for long-term support of patients with chronic diseases.

**Because positions for family physicians are widely available throughout the country in large cities and small towns, these physicians have the opportunity to choose the type of community where they live and work.**

After entering practice, a family physician often becomes an important part of the community. Family physicians often serve as the high school sports team physician. Family physicians also frequently serve on

hospital boards and advisory groups for community agencies. Integration into the fabric of the community can be an especially rewarding part of the practice. The financial viability of some local hospitals depends on admissions from the family physician. Also, the family physician's referrals are essential to the sub-specialists' practice. Thus family physicians are treated with great respect and appreciation by their local hospital and sub-specialists.

## Excellent Income Potential

**Family medicine offers the opportunity to earn an excellent income.**

While you did not enter medicine for the money, monetary concerns are real-world issues, particularly to medical students who often face heavy financial debts. Family medicine offers an income that is more than adequate to pay off debts and also maintain a very high standard of living for you and your family.

In an urban or suburban setting, the average family physician earns about \$150,000 per year in private practice (2003 data) and income continues to increase annually. This is above 95% of U.S. family incomes. Family physicians who work in smaller towns often earn more.

Financial modeling by the AAFP suggests that by implementing new processes in office medicine, family

physicians can improve their income by 30% to 60%, as well as improving patient satisfaction.

When considering any career choice, some of the major philosophical questions to be answered include: What truly brings me professional satisfaction? Would I be more content with more money, or are the elements of the specialty as important?

## Scope of Practice Can Vary Widely

**The family physician's scope of practice can vary widely.**

Family medicine can be very flexible. Some family physicians prefer to see more geriatric patients, while others want to care for more children, and still others are more interested in providing preventive care, office procedures, or sports

medicine services. Many work in urgent or emergency care settings, some are hospitalists exclusively, and others work only in the outpatient setting.

Providing obstetrical care is a very attractive option for some family medicine residency graduates. Some

family medicine residency graduates pursue research, public health, or administrative careers.

Many find academic careers especially fulfilling for those interested in teaching or research.

## Distinctive and Diversified Training Opportunities

### Family medicine is a specialty with distinctive training opportunities.

Family physicians specialize in integration of care. Family Medicine was the first specialty among the American Board of Medical Specialties to require recertification exams.

Family medicine is constantly evaluating ways to strengthen residency training, changing the certification process to reinforce state-of-the-art delivery of care, and adopting the latest technologies to improve quality of care and patient safety.

Family medicine is the only specialty that provides a comprehensive curriculum in clinical preventive care for all patient life stages. Many people look to their family physician for preventive care services. Family physicians provide well-child care and periodic preventive examinations for adult patients.

Family medicine residency training includes a special emphasis on teaching how to care for patients with chronic diseases and how to prevent disease progression through behavioral and lifestyle interventions.

The training of a family physician includes recognition and treatment of common psychiatric disorders, such as depression, chronic anxiety, addiction, or psychosomatic disease, sometimes in consultation with a mental health specialist. These patients account for about 10-12% of those seen in a typical family medicine practice. A basic tenet of family medicine is that biomedical disorders, both chronic and acute, are often accompanied by a psychological component.

Family physicians place great importance on treating the underlying biomedical disease component along with its co-existing psychological component.



Michele Emery, M.D.  
Assistant Professor, UF CHFM  
UF Student Health Care Center

*"I went into family medicine because I enjoy interacting with people in all stages of life from childhood to adulthood. Being someone's family physician gives you a special way to bring healing into many areas of a person's life."*

-Michele Emery, M.D.

## Family Medicine affords varied opportunities.

### Diverse Fellowships Offering Subspecialties

Some family physicians may want to focus on one particular aspect of their practice. Graduates of family medicine residencies can complete fellowships in geriatrics, adolescent medicine, obstetrics, preventive medicine, and sports medicine.

There are a number of family medicine residencies that combine family medicine with other specialties, such as preventive medicine, psychiatry, emergency medicine or internal medicine.



Dan Rubin, M.D.  
Assistant Professor, UF CHFM  
Family Medicine at Haile Plantation

*"I feel family medicine is unique in that it offers the ability to treat people who are ill, but also works toward health maintenance and disease prevention in all ages."*

-Dan Rubin, M.D.



Ken Grauer, M.D.  
Professor, Associate Director  
UF Family Medicine Residency Program

*"Three decades ago I chose family medicine as my specialty because I did not want to be relegated to being a 'partial doctor' who could only take care of some limited area or body system. I wanted to know enough about everything to be able to care for people of both sexes and all ages regardless of what the problem happened to be. I have not regretted this choice of specialty training for a single day during these past 30 years."*

-Ken Grauer, M.D.



Martha Hurst, M.D.  
Assistant Professor, UF CHFM  
Clinical Service for Inpatients  
Shands at AGH

*"I like the detective work and the unexpected. I like to look at the patient as a whole system, not just as 'the heart' or 'the gallbladder.' Finding the answer to the problem is what is great and it doesn't bother me if I need help for the more in depth knowledge and procedures."*

-Martha Hurst, M.D.



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Please note: The Family Practice Residency Program is only accepting applications for residency via the ERAS system. Contact your dean's office or ECFMG for more information.

## Why Choose The University of Florida Family Medicine Residency Program?

The University of Florida Family Medicine Residency Program, based in Shands at Alachua General Hospital, offers the educational advantages of a **superior academic family medicine program**, in a community hospital where the only residency is family medicine.

Established in 1973 and **fully accredited by the ACGME**, the University of Florida Family Medicine Program offers broad-based training to physicians who have chosen to dedicate themselves to the medical specialty of family medicine.

As of 2004, our Family Medicine Residency Program has over **185 graduates, all of whom are board certified.**

In addition to the Residency Program, the Department of Community Health and Family Medicine sponsors programs in rural medicine, community family medicine, behavioral medicine, medical student education, student health, and medical humanities and ethics, ensuring a **well-rounded educational experience.**

The program is **designed to educate family physicians to be expert clinicians**, fully competent to handle the wide spectrum of problems encountered in family medicine.

The program has been designed to promote a **healthy integration of bio-medical and psychosocial instruction** to optimize training in the specialty that provides continuing and comprehensive healthcare to the individual and family.

### A Note From the Chair

Dear Medical Student:

Your choice of specialty is often one of the more difficult decisions you will make in medical school. There are many rewarding specialties, and it is important to consider your interests and talents when making this choice.

It takes a special aptitude and set of interests to be a family physician. To help you decide if Family Medicine is the right specialty for you, our faculty has prepared this informational brochure discussing key issues for you to consider.

Please feel free to call me or any of the faculty in the Department of Community Health and Family Medicine if you have questions about a career in family medicine.

Sincerely,

R. Whit Curry, Jr., M.D.



**G**ainesville, located in North Central Florida, is the perfect spot for those who enjoy the outdoors. Within 50 miles, there are at least 40 natural settings that offer camping, hiking, swimming, mountain biking, boating, fishing and a multitude of other outdoor activities.

In September of 1995 the City was ranked by *Money Magazine* as the best place to live in America. For five consecutive years, it has been tapped as Florida's most livable city and has ranked among the leaders in the nation. Gainesville is a progressive city with a population of about 130,000. Due to the presence of the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College, the city offers a great number of activities combining the best aspects of a metropolitan city with the hospitality of a college town. The climate has distinct seasonal changes with mild winters and an average annual temperature of a perfect 70 degrees.

For a city its size, Gainesville offers many cultural events. It is the home of the critically acclaimed Hippodrome Theater, the Gainesville Civic Ballet and the Gainesville Ballet Theater, all providing performances throughout the year. The Center for the Performing Arts presents the finest in world-class entertainment from Broadway, opera and dance, to the superstars of pop, jazz, classical, and country music. The nationally renowned Harn Museum of Art is located beside Florida's newest state Museum of Natural History.