



ADJUSTMENTS . . .

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Originally published in the March/April Sutureline, Volume 36, No. 2

Admittedly, it has been difficult adjusting to working life after PA school. PA school felt like a race while juggling a thousand different tasks at the same time. For me work life has been different. It is far more focused but at the same time less structured. Furthermore PA school was about finding the right answer whereas in my job as a PA things are far less black and white. I would call it more a test of your judgement of the situation rather a test to see if you know the right answer.

Needless to say the learning doesn't stop. Especially when you enter a specialty or subspecialty like I did. I work for a group of neurosurgeons in North Carolina where we treat cerebral aneurysms and tumors of the skull base. Never when I was studying in school did I think I would know as much about the Circle of Willis and its associated pathologies. It's an exciting field and interesting work. That said, there are times where I feel like some of the more basic aspects of medicine, like the treatment of a UTI, are slowly fading from my mind.

To limit this slow fade I have worked to intermittently review the particularly commonly encountered aspects of primary care. Looking through the PANCE study books is a good way for me to keep it fresh in my mind. Of course I use resources like UpToDate.com, which is readily available where I work. Our practice, like many others, is busy but when time allows I will spend time talking with patients about features of their life that may be contributing to or a result of their neurosurgical diagnosis. For example, patients are often anxious and losing sleep after they are diagnosed with a brain tumor. Taking the time to counsel them on sleep hygiene and management of their anxiety is greatly valued and often rewarded all while keeping the foundations of medicine fresh in my mind.

Finally for my classmates and I, when we chose a job after PA school many of us knew exactly where we wanted to land. However, in discussions with classmates after we had entered the working world I found that many of them actually didn't know what they wanted to do. Some ended up choosing specialties and have been left feeling unfulfilled. I think admitting you don't know what type of work you want to do even towards the end of your PA education is perfectly acceptable. You should take time to explore options and find where you will fit best. It is my opinion that primary care is a great option. It will give you a broad scope and expose you to multiple specialties so you can land where you are meant to be.