

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF PHYSICIAN SHADOWING EXPERIENCES

### Preparing for the Experience

In order to get the most out of your physician “shadowing” experience and learn more about what it is like to be a physician, dentist, or other health care professional, you need to learn not only what the professional with whom you’ll be spending time does all day, but also how he or she puts the day together, allows time for the unexpected, stays current in the profession, addresses uncertainty, integrates personal and professional life, and other issues.

There’s a lot to learn, both from the professional and from the patients, as well as from the patients’ families (or their owners if you’re spending time with a veterinarian). Experienced health care professionals know that patients and families are important teachers.

### “What did I learn?”

Among other activities during this experience, you consider the following questions:

- What did I learn from this transaction with the patient about:
  - The patient’s illness
  - What’s going on in the patient’s life that may have importance in dealing with the illness
  - The doctor-patient relationship
- The importance of spending enough time
- The importance of engaged listening without interruption
- How the doctor reasons and makes decisions
- What did I learn, not only *about* the patient, but *from* the patient? What did the patient teach me?
- What did I learn about what it’s *really* like to be a doctor?

Consider keeping a journal of your experiences and reflections. Journaling is not only a way to record facts and feelings, but also is an important step in becoming a reflective doctor, a valuable quality. The journal will also be a helpful resource as you complete your applications to professional school. We suggest also that you share these guidelines with the person(s) whom you are shadowing, so that you can have shared goals.

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