

Alternative career options for medical students

While at university, or soon after graduating, some people decide that medicine is not for them or, that they would at least like to explore the alternatives. Here are some thoughts:

- If you are thinking of changing or leaving your medical degree course, talk to your tutors in the Medical School for their advice, and read this guide.
- Book an appointment with a careers adviser to talk about your options. Some options (but not all) are discussed in our A-Z list below; many of these have connections to healthcare.
- Take time to reflect on your strengths. Think about the many skills gained during a medical degree and how these are highly prized by employers. Whether or not you have a degree at the end, this is about being able to market the fact that 3 years of medicine is possibly a lot more demanding than 3 years' study of most other subjects.
- It is worth noting that it is estimated that around 50-60% of all graduate-level jobs are open to those from any discipline, so there is no reason why your degree in medicine would not be held in high regard by all sorts of employers. The skills you will have developed on your course and subsequent training will be very transferable.

A-Z List of Alternative Occupations:

Allied Health Professions

Dietetics, Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Radiography.

Read more:

- <http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals>

Charity Administration

Administration involves a variety of tasks; usually the larger the organisation the more specialised the role. In particular, you could choose to work for a medical related organisation such as a medical research charity.

Read more:

- www.prospects.ac.uk/charities_voluntary_sector_overview.htm
- www.amrc.org.uk

Civil Service inc. Fast Stream

Becoming a Civil Servant could be as simple as applying for one of the many jobs advertised on the website, but they also offer a variety of fast track routes for promising graduates and experienced professionals. There are many different departments and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), including the Department of Health, Healthcare Commission, Health Protection Agency, Medical Research Council and more. Entry-level jobs in the Civil Service occur at different levels but one major route of entry for graduates is the Civil Service Fast Stream.

Read more:

- www.civilservice.gov.uk/recruitment
- www.civilservice.gov.uk/recruitment/departments-and-accredited-ndpbs
- <http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk>

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based psychological treatment for a variety of disorders including depression, anxiety, panic disorder, fatigue syndrome, OCD, bulimia nervosa and insomnia.

Read more:

- www.babcp.com
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/treatments/cbt.aspx

Complementary Medicine

Complementary medicine is defined as treatments which are used alongside conventional medical treatments. The five main treatments in the UK are osteopathy, chiropractic, herbalism, homoeopathy, and acupuncture.

Read more:

- www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs_health.htm
- www.iscmr.org

Financial services roles

Financial planners recommend the courses of action and financial products that will be most beneficial to their clients, who may be individuals or organisations. You may be interested in financial service roles generally, or there are links to healthcare in some of the specialised healthcare analyst roles.

Read more:

- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/financial-services-and-insurance>

Health Economics

Health economists study the functioning of the health care system. Their aim is to obtain maximum value for money by ensuring not just the clinical effectiveness, but also the cost-effectiveness of healthcare provision

Read more:

- www.ohe.org

Health Policy

Health policy analysis is the process of assessing and choosing between spending and resource alternatives that affect the health care system and the health of the general public.

Read more:

- www.who.int/topics/health_policy/en/
- www.nice.org.uk

Health Promotion

Health promotion helps people to improve and increase control over their health. Plan, ensure implementation of, and evaluate policies and strategies to promote health within a specialist setting, relating to a specific issue, or within a particular population.

Read more:

- www.rsph.org.uk
- www.ihpe.org.uk/memb/institute.htm
- www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/public-health-practitioner

Health Service Management

Health service managers are responsible for the provision and commissioning of local health care through the management of hospital, general practitioner (GP) and community health services. Managers liaise with all levels of medical staff, whilst considering the demands of political policy and local circumstances.

Read more:

- www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles

Healthcare Scientist

Largely lab-based, working in one of three broad areas within the NHS, namely life sciences, physiological sciences, or clinical engineering and medical physics.

Read more:

- www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-science-assistant-and-associate

Management Consultancy

Management consultants initiate and implement technological, organisational and behavioural changes in an organisation. Their work involves providing objective appraisals where it is often easier for an expert outsider to see the broader picture. Some work is in healthcare-related settings.

Read more:

- www.mca.org.uk/careers-jobs
- www.prospects.ac.uk/management_consultant_job_description.htm

Medical Devices

The medical device industry covers the research, development, manufacture, regulation, marketing and selling of devices from a straightforward dressing to a complex surgical robot. Medical devices are an essential element of health care and play a role in diagnosing, preventing and treating disease, illness, and medical conditions. The Association of British Healthcare Industries (ABHI) is the industry association for the UK medical devices sector.

Read more:

- www.abhi.org.uk/home.aspx

Medical Informatics

Medical informatics deals with the resources, devices, and methods required to optimise the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information in health and biomedicine.

Read more:

- www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles
- www.ebi.ac.uk
- www.biomedcentral.com/bmcmedinformdecismak

Medical Journalism

Medical journalists write articles on medical matters for a variety of media including newspapers, magazines and professional journals, both in print and online, or work in broadcast media.

Read more:

- www.mjauk.org
- www.absw.org.uk

Medical Illustration/Photography

A medical illustrator is a professional artist who interprets and creates visual material to help record and disseminate medical, biological and related knowledge. Medical photographers produce accurate and objective images that truthfully record injuries and diseases, as well as the progress of operations and medical procedures.

Read more:

- www.imi.org.uk
- www.skillset.org/photo/careers/photographers/article_3425_1.asp

Medical Publishing

There are a wide range of roles within publishing. These include editor, proofreader, graphic designer, planner, sales and marketing. Individuals may work on printed or digital information in the form of books, magazines, journals, newspapers, databases, directories and electronic media.

Read more:

- www.alpsp.org
- www.medcommsnetworking.co.uk/aboutus.html

Medical Sales

Medical representatives are the key contacts between the pharmaceutical/medical equipment industry and the medical profession. They have the responsibility of promoting their company's products directly to GPs and hospital doctors.

Read more:

- <http://careers.abpi.org.uk/working-in-the-industry/commercial/Pages/default.aspx>
- www.allaboutmedicalsales.com

Medical Translation

A medical translator produces alternative versions of original medical materials in other languages. As well as the obvious requirements of language skills and familiarity with technical terminology, you would also need an ability to conduct any background research for appropriate terms, and an understanding of the cultural problems of translation.

Read more:

- <http://beyondclinical.thecareersgroup.co.uk/Professionalprofiles/MedicalTranslation/Description.aspx>

NHS clinical science non-graduate opportunities

Apprenticeships in healthcare science might be available in NHS trusts across the country. There will usually be the opportunity to work towards vocational qualifications in subjects, such as pathology support, and foundation degrees (or equivalent) underpinned by an awards and qualifications framework.

Read more:

- <http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-science-assistant-and-associate>

NHS Graduates scheme

For those interested in management roles –the NHS offers graduate training schemes in human resources management, finance management and general management.

Read more:

- <http://www.nhsgraduates.co.uk/>

Pharmaceutical Medicine

Job opportunities for doctors in pharmaceutical medicine range from medical advisory positions and clinical research through to becoming medical director of a company. Patient contact is limited but still possible in the clinical trials area.

Read more:

- <http://careers.abpi.org.uk/>

Public Finance Accountancy (and the accountancy professions)

Public finance accountants are responsible for ensuring the effective operation of accounting and financial activities within public sector organisations. Many work for public bodies, such as local and central government and publicly funded organisations such as the NHS. There are an increasing number of opportunities within the major accountancy firms who provide audit and consultancy services to public bodies, plus opportunities in other branches of the accountancy profession.

Read more:

- www.cipfa.org.uk
- www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs_financial.htm

Public Relations and Corporate Communication Media and communications staff build, maintain and manage the reputation of their clients or their employing organisations. Most NHS organisations have people responsible for effective communication with staff, patients and other stakeholders.

Read more:

- www.cipr.co.uk/content/careers-cpd

Teaching

For teaching roles you will require a degree but this is not always the case for other roles in the education sector. With the possibility of teaching the sciences, you will be able to apply the skills you have learnt during your medical degree.

Read more:

- http://www.prospects.ac.uk/teaching_education_sector_getting_a_graduate_job.htm

Other options:

Studying for a Postgraduate Degree

- 'Find a Masters' or 'Find a PhD' offer a good overview of programmes available.
- 'Prospects' or 'Target' also have searchable database. If you are interested in doing further study abroad, 'Prospects' have good guidance to help you start exploring this.
- For more in depth information, look on specific university websites, talk to course admission tutors or attend an open day/evening. Opendays.com provides many dates.
- Unlike undergraduate degrees, there is no central admission system (like UCAS) so you will probably have to complete application forms specific to the University you are applying to the course from. Some universities do use the UKPASS system.

Read more:

- <http://www.findamasters.com/>
- <http://www.findaphd.com/>
- http://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_study.htm
- <http://targetcourses.co.uk/>
- <http://www.opendays.com/>

Further resources, recruitment agencies and job sites :

Academic positions

- Jobs in academia: www.jobs.ac.uk
- Nature Jobs: www.nature.com/naturejobs

Clinical Science

- <http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles>
- www.whatcanidowithmydegree.nhs.uk

Clinical Psychology/mental health

- www.bps.org.uk
- www.psyclick.org.uk
- www.psychminded.co.uk
- www.mind.org.uk/help/social_factors/careers_in_mental_health

General Vacancy Sites

- The Guardian: www.guardianjobs.co.uk

Healthcare science & allied health professions

- Labmed Specialist recruitment: www.labmedrecruit.co.uk
- Mediplacements: www.mediplacements.com
- Reed Health: www.reedhealth.com

Health & Bioinformatics

- BioHealthMatics: www.biohealthmatics.com
- Jobs4Medical: www.jobs4medical.co.uk
- Amber Jobs Scientific: <http://www.amber-jobs.co.uk/science.htm>

Pharmaceutical Industry

- ABPI Careers: <http://www.abpi.org.uk/our-work/careers/Pages/default.aspx>
- Breakthrough: <http://jobs.pmlive.com/>
- Flame Pharma: www.flamepharma.co.uk
- British Pharmaceutical Students Association: www.bpsa.co.uk
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain: <http://www.rpharms.com>
- Pharmiweb: www.pharmiweb.com
- US student version for comparison: www.studentpharmacist.com/
- Article about finding vacation experience:
www.pharmj.com/pdf/tp/2004/tp_2004_p25vacation.pdf

Public Health

- Health Careers: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health

Science Careers

- Science Careers Magazine: <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/>
- New Scientist: <http://www.newscientist.com/>
- Janice Simpson www.naturejobs.com
- Careers Tagged: www.careerstagged.co.uk

Science communication (science events, museums, journalism, media)

- Science Magazine:
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2000_04_07/nod.oi.1116193894384142265

Scientific Recruitment Agencies

Laboratory and pharmaceutical

- Hays Pharma: www.hayspharma.com
- Lab Support: www.labsupport.co.uk
- Kelly Scientific: www.kellyscientific.com
- Matchtech: www.matchtech.com
- Pharmajobs: www.pharmajobs.com
- Reed Scientific: www.reed.co.uk/scientific
- SRG: www.science-recruitment.com
- Sterling Cross: www.sterlingcross.com
- Pharmfinders: www.pharmfinders.co.uk
- PJ Careers: www.pjcareers.com
- Jobs in Pharmacy: www.jobsinpharmacy.co.uk
- Academic Jobs: www.academicjobseu.com/content/categories/med-Pharmacy.asp
- Jobs4medical: www.jobs4medical.co.uk
- Jobs1: www.jobs1.co.uk
- www.jobs.ac.uk

Scientific Sales

- Zenopa: www.zenopa.com
- Seltek Consultants: <http://www.seltekconsultants.co.uk/>