



TIPS FOR GAINING CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

CLINICAL SHADOWING

- Seek out clinical shadowing experiences with a variety of clinicians, spending at least ½-1 day each with the following assortment of clinicians:
 - Primary care clinician
 - Medical specialist
 - Surgical specialist
 - At least one clinician in a different but similar career (i.e., if you are interested in dentistry, also shadow a physician or optometrist or podiatrist)
- If, clinical shadowing is not an option, consider the following alternatives:
 - Inquire about the possibility of “shadowing” clinicians by observing telehealth sessions
 - Conduct informational interviews with a variety of clinicians

DIRECT PATIENT INTERACTION

- Volunteer in a hospital, clinic, or hospice:
 - This approach is a common first step, as volunteer positions do not require formal training and the weekly time commitment is fairly low (typically ~4 hours/week). If you are interested in finding a position of this sort, do a web search to find the contact information of the volunteer coordinator of the facility where you would like to volunteer. Aim to find a position that allows you to interact directly with patients in a truly clinical setting in the hospital (in the Emergency Department, for example, not the Welcome Desk or gift shop).
- Other options:
 - Volunteering with a crisis hotline (remote patient interaction)
 - Volunteering at a blood donation center (in-person patient interaction)
 - Volunteering as a contact tracer (remote patient interaction)
- Clinic Assistant and/or Medical Assistant:
 - Although medical assistant certification programs exist, they are geared toward high school graduates. It is fairly common for clinics to provide on-the-job training to college graduates who are hired to serve as a clinic assistant. This type of work would allow you to interact directly, in a hands-on role, with many patients per day in a clinic. Many of our pre-health students have found work as clinic assistants in primary care, dermatology, otolaryngology, dental, veterinary, physical therapy, and optometry clinics.
- CNA (Certified Nurse Aide):
 - This is a hands-on, roll-up-your-sleeves job that allows you to serve patients in a direct and caring way. Most CNAs work in long-term care facilities, which means that they get to develop real relationships with the patients they serve. This position requires hard—and, at times, dirty—work. That said, if you become a CNA and carry out your work in a way that

demonstrates your respect and care for each individual you serve, you'll not only provide a bright spot in your patients' days but also will continually develop your bedside manner. This work provides abundant evidence of your dedication to compassionate patient care. There are LOTS of local CNA jobs available, so it is common to find paid part-time positions—but the quality of those positions can vary widely. You can complete CNA certification at a community college, technical school, and at some assisted living facilities. Here in the Boulder area, a popular CNA training center is Compass Nursing Arts. Be aware that training courses cost several hundred dollars and the pay is relatively low, so it may take a few months to recoup your investment in the training course if working part-time.

- Home health aide or personal care attendant (through an agency or private party):
 - This type of work is similar to that of a CNA, but in a home-care setting. Many such agencies and private parties will provide on-the-job training. This type of direct patient care experience is highly valued, but pre-health students who engage in home health care should supplement it with volunteer or work experience in a hospital or clinic so that they are exposed to the type of work environment where they will practice as a future clinician.
- EMT (Emergency Medical Technician): Work on an ambulance or as an emergency department technician
 - This position can be a great fit for pre-health students who are drawn to fast-paced, dynamic work. You would need to complete an EMT training course (which costs more than CNA training). Potential downsides: Depending on where you hope to work, it may be hard as a newly-minted EMT to find an ambulance job, and ED tech jobs may require overnight shifts. Do some research on the work options in your area before committing to an EMT course.
- Phlebotomist:
 - In this position, you would get lots of practice at setting people at ease when they are afraid of needles. Potential downside: You only spend a very short period of time with each patient, so the nature of the work may not be as rewarding as some of the other positions on this list. Note: Some hospitals provide on-the-job training.
- Psychiatric Care Technician:
 - Some residential mental health institutions provide on-the-job training.