

## What is “Shadowing”?

### **Shadowing is Observing**

When we speak of shadowing, we are referring to observing. Shadowing can be applied to just about any profession, but shadowing a physician includes observing how a doctor spends his/her day, how a doctor interacts and communicates with patients, and how a doctor works with a health care team. Added benefits of shadowing are that it helps you determine if medicine is the right career choice for you, and, when you apply to professional school, it shows the admissions offices that you’ve worked inside a health care facility.

### **How to Find an Experience**

- Use your resources!
  - Do you know currently visit one of these professionals? Have family members or friends you can ask?
- Student Organizations (i.e. Premed AMSA and others)
- Reach out and Read program (shadowing opportunities available after volunteering 4 times)
- Research & Call! Call hospitals, private practices, etc.
  - Reference USA (i.e. white pages for doctors)
- Summer Programs

### **What to Send to Physicians When Inquiring**

- Your resume. It is of utmost importance that this be clean, neat, and look professional. We encourage all students to go to the Career Center for guidance on developing a resume.
- A paragraph on why you are interested in shadowing that particular professional. Include the fact that you are a pre-med student studying at the University of South Florida, and that you have aspirations of becoming a \_\_\_\_\_. You should also include why you want to observe that professional or within that department.

*Please understand that every hospital has their own policies and procedures regarding the legality of shadowing physicians. So while some hospitals may prohibit it, others may be fine as long as you fulfill their requirements. You simply need to ask physicians if they will allow you to shadow them, and if they say yes, you’re good to go!*

### **Additional Suggestions and Tips**

- Be professional. This includes arriving on time to each appointment, dressing professionally, and being courteous to everyone you meet.
- Know your limits. You are not a medical professional, so do not expect to participate in hands-on patient care.
- Keep a journal. See the next page for more information
- Shadowing does not (and should not) be limited to just one day, one week or one doctor. We suggest shadowing multiple physicians in multiple settings over the course of your pre-med studies

*Information taken directly from Johns Hopkins Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising Website, October 2014*

## **Guidelines For Getting The Most Out Of The “Shadowing” Experience**

Among the most important choices in life is that of a career and life’s work. In this single choice are combined one’s values and aspirations, one’s self expectations and assessment of talents, uncertainty, consideration of costs—time and money, and concern about how the choice will have impact on one’s personal and family life. The choice of a career in health care is all of that, and is, in a word, complex.

In order to get the most out of your doctor “shadowing” experience and learning *what it’s 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:

- organizes the day;
- 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. A long—and hopefully leisurely—conversation about the above matters with the person whom you are shadowing can add to the experience. Most professions appreciate the opportunity to reflect and teach.

### **What did you Learn?**

We suggest that, among other activities during this experience, you consider these 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 when treating 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?

### **Recording and Reflecting on your Experience**

Unlike volunteering in high school, there is NO official paperwork that is required for proving shadowing experiences. We suggest that you keep 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. In this journal you can put the contact information of the office/physician, and dates for your personal record keeping.

*Information taken directly from Laurence A. Savett, M.D. at the University of St. Thomas, June 2008*