

The career of general pediatricians: duties, education, salary, history of the pr...

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When I was younger, I loved going to my pediatrician and I always knew that my career would be similar to hers because of my passion for caring for children. In grade school, I always ended up being the classroom assistant fetching Band-Aids for my fellow classmates when they managed to get a papercut. As a camp counselor, I was the runner that was called to grab ice packs or bring the first aid kit. The day I taught my first daycare class was also my first experience treating a minor scrape on a little boys' head. Along with my experiences caring for children, I have experience shadowing doctors, working at a hospital (as a transporter), and studying biology for my undergraduate degree. I feel that I have been called into the field of healthcare not only to care for children but to educate parents and children on the benefits of healthy lifestyles. Being a pediatrician is more complicated than putting Band-Aids on cuts and treating minor injuries, but after considering my dedication for learning biology and my passion for helping others, I decided to look deeper into the careers of general pediatricians.

General pediatricians are “ physicians that diagnose, treat, and help prevent children’s diseases and injuries” (29-1065 Pediatricians, General).

Pediatricians generally care for “ patients whose ages range from birth to 21 years old,” and pediatricians have the responsibility of explaining to parents any “ health and behavioral issues” a child may have (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). Pediatricians have the opportunity to educate parents on “ the next phase of their child’s growth” and answer any questions parents have about the care of their child too (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). Pediatricians are also responsible for “ attending to minor injuries, ordering immunizations, and treating common

childhood infectious diseases” (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). Specialty and location are main factors that cause a pediatrician’s salary to vary, yet the national median annual wages is “\$168, 990” (29-1065 Pediatricians, General). The salary of pediatricians vary depending on the industry in which they work. For example, pediatricians in the industry of “ Individual and Family Services” have an average median annual wage of “\$127, 560” and “ Specialty (except Psychiatric and Substance Abuse) Hospital” pediatricians have an annual mean wage of “\$229, 180” (national values taken from the chart of “ Industries with the highest levels of employment in this occupation” from 29-1065 Pediatricians, General). The annual mean wages for pediatricians in Louisiana range from “\$187, 790-\$208, 980” (29-1065 Pediatricians, General). Pediatric medicine is not a new career as “ throughout history, dating back to ancient Greek times, doctors have provided medical care to people of all ages,” and with technology advancements and specialization the overall care of patients is evolving (Smith).

Patients of all ages have been treated by traditional medical doctors in early medicine and “ the first pediatric hospital in the Western world is generally accept to be the Hôpital des Enfants Malades,” and opened in Paris in 1802 for “ patients only up to the age of 15 years” (Smith). Also, “ Dr. Abraham Jacobi is considered to be the father of pediatrics in America” as he traveled to New York in 1853 and formed pediatric healthcare societies and developed children’s departments in New York hospitals (Smith). In the 1930’s, the “ American Pediatric Society and American Academy of Pediatrics” was created, and even today pediatricians are “ certified and

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regulated by” these societies (Smith). Also, specialization in pediatric practice and numerous advancements in technology have advanced the quality of patient care. Improvements include: “ diagnostic and therapeutic technologies, improved electronic medical records, information-sharing platforms to improve transitions within and between hospital systems and telemedicine also will contribute to the practice of pediatrics in hospitals” (Quinonez). Ricardo A. Quinonez, M. D., FAAP addresses in his article the importance of advancing technology and the possibility of a new career specialty, Pediatric Hospital Medicine, which allows the providers to dedicate their careers to the “ patient experience and outcomes of hospitalized children” (Quinonez). Along with evolving practice of pediatric medicine, the job market “ outlook for physicians and surgeons in general is expected to be good from 2012-2022” (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). “ Employment is projected to increase by 10% between 2014 and 2024 due to expanding healthcare needs,” and there is expected “ good job opportunities in rural areas since it is more difficult to find physicians to work in these places” (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). The advancing technology has enhanced the way pediatric medicine is practiced, and physicians (in general) have a positive predicted job outlook in the future; however, the process of becoming any type of physician requires many hours of study and clinical experience.

The education requirements for medical doctors include first completing a Bachelor’s degree, then a four year medical degree, then “ three years residency,” and “ subspecialties require additional training or specialized residencies” (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). Prior to

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entering medical school, undergraduate degrees that are looked highly upon include: " health sciences," " health studies," and biological sciences (MCAT testing is also required to apply to medical schools in the United States) (What is the Employment outlook for Pediatricians?). The first two years of medical school in the United States involves " basic and clinical science courses," and the third and fourth year include " clinical clerkship/rotations" and residency (Vioreanu). There are three medical schools in Louisiana: " Tulane University of Louisiana," " Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center-New Orleans," and " Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center-Shreveport" (Which Schools Offer Medical Degree Programs in Louisiana?). The top five ranking schools for Medical degrees in the United States " include: Harvard University, Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, University of California, University of Pennsylvania" (Vioreanu). Along with the education preparation, a professional " Board certification through the American Board of Pediatrics" is required to practice in the United States (What Is the Employment Outlook for Pediatricians?). The education requirement, certifications, and the training process to become a pediatrician is extensive, yet there are numerous pros and cons that need to be considered before perusing this career path.

Some benefits of becoming a general pediatrician include: they have a " relatively normal work hours," they have the ability work with the same patients long term, and they have a " relatively low stress job" compared to other medical doctors (Gray). Unlike typical overnight emergency room and surgical doctors, general pediatricians have the ability to work " 9 a. m. to 5 p. m., Monday through Friday" (Gray). Also, general pediatricians have the

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ability to care for the same patients “ from the time they’re babies to when they are 21 years old,” so there is the ability to “ bond with patients and their families” longer than other medical doctors (Gray). “ For many doctors, working with kids is the best part of the job,” and the ability to monitor the growth of many children from infancy to adulthood can be very rewarding (Gray). There are many benefits that come with a career in pediatric medicine; however, there are aspects of the career path that can be negative.

Although there are many promising benefits of the career choice, there are some considerable negative consequences. Some cons that aspiring general pediatricians need to consider is the acceptance rate to medical school, the expensive and long education, the cost of living while in school, and that general pediatricians typically “ earning less money than any other type of doctor” (Gray). Prior to attaining the job, the difficulty of getting into medical school is concerning as “ over 40, 000 students apply for just around 20, 000 available places in classes at medical schools in the U. S. each year,” so being able to stand out from the other applicants is important when applying (Vioreanu). After getting into college, aspiring physicians need to consider the cost of a long educational career, and medical school at Louisiana State University in New Orleans cost above “\$14, 290” a semester (Also, taking into consideration how funds will be obtained to support yourself while in school) (Which Schools Offer Medical Degree Programs in Louisiana?). Once the career is attained, the thought of “ earning less money than any other type of doctor” is concerning as the same amount or more education and training is involved to qualify for becoming a pediatrician, and the amount of

debt accumulated throughout the educational process may become an issue (Gray). Also, working with children can be rewarding, yet “sometimes kids will be too sick to save, which can be depressing,” (so the mental states of the practicing physician needs to be stable and the ability to stay strong for parents and coworkers is necessary) (Gray). Although there are many negative aspects of the career choice, the ability to go through the extensive education just to be certified to care for children and being able to promote the welfare of our future generation is inspiring.

After researching my intended career, I have fallen more in love with the different aspects of the career path. I know the journey will not be easy or cheap, but I am determined to reach my goal of becoming a Pediatrician. Although I am striving to become a medical doctor, I have also decided to partake in Louisiana State University’s Geaux Teach Program where I will be certified to teach in Louisiana after I complete my biology degree (double major). I believe that my decision to partake in the Geaux Teach Program will not only enhance my communication skills, but also better connect and educate children and their parents if I do become a pediatrician. Only time can tell my future career and hopefully whatever career I peruse will bring me a life of happiness.